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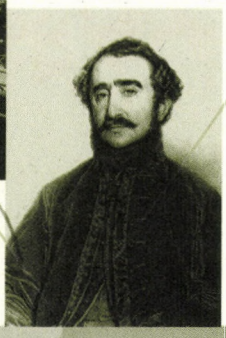

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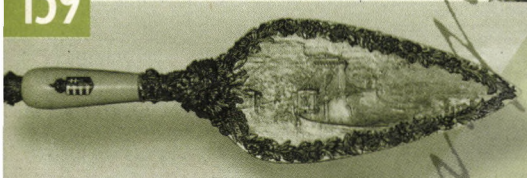

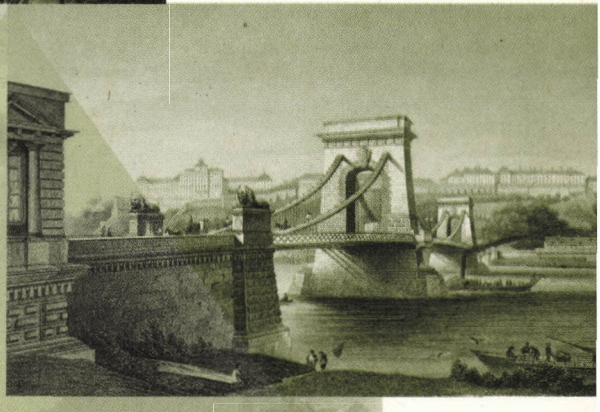

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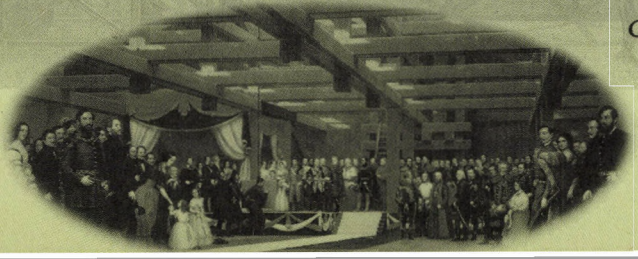

# The Hungarian Quarterly

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Ignác Romsics

# The Great Powers and the Dissolution of Austria-Hungary

The Great Powers twice interfered in the life of the Habsburg Empire: first in 1849, when they prevented its disintegration, and in 1918/19, when they assisted at its demise. In 1849 the decisive role belonged to Russia. Mindful of dynastic solidarity and fearing the spread of the revolutionary tide and its direful effect on his own multiethnic empire, the Czar shelved his own expansive ambitions concerning parts of the Danubian Empire inhabited by Ukrainians—Eastern Galicia, the Bukovina and Sub-Carpathia—and ordered his armies to come to the aid of the Habsburgs. Although Britain and France did not intervene militarily, their passivity unambiguously signalled that they considered the survival of the Habsburg Empire as necessary for the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe. As Lord Palmerston, the future Prime Minister, put it in 1849: "Austria stands in the centre of Europe, a barrier against encroachment on the one side and against invasion on the other. The political independence and liberties of Europe are bound up, in my opinion, with the maintenance and integrity of Austria as a great European Power, and therefore anything which tends by direct or even remote contingency to wreck and to cripple Austria, but still more to reduce her from the position of a first-rate power to that of a second state, must be a great calamity to Europe which every Englishman ought to deprecate and try to prevent."[1]

After 1849, in the sixties and seventies, policy towards Vienna changed in St Petersburg, London and Paris alike. By intervening on the Turkish and Western side in the 1854/55 Crimean War, and by temporarily occupying the Danubian Principalities, the Habsburgs lost the trust the Russians had invested in them. The occupation of Bosnia-Herczegovina in 1878 and, especially, its annexation in 1908, fatally damaged relations between Vienna and St Petersburg, since these actions tilted the balance of power in the Balkans in favour of Austria-Hungary at the

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expense of Russia. In London and Paris too, they took a poor view of that annexation, the more so because of the alliance Austria-Hungary had entered into with the German Reich in 1879. Considerations that derived from the supposed strategic role of the Danubian Empire in ensuring equilibrium had also lost their relevance because of the serious internal tensions that had thrown Austria-Hungary off balance. The longing for a federal constitution by the Slavs—primarily the Czechs and Croats—was accompanied in the first decade of the twentieth century by a deteriorating relationship between the Germans and the Hungarians, the two privileged nations of the Empire. It therefore became fashionable in the West in the immediate pre-war years to refer to the Habsburg Empire as the Sick Man of Europe, the name that had long been attached to the Ottoman Empire.

The First World War, as most wars, was fought over territory. Italy demanded the Tyrol, Istria and Dalmatia, Serbia demanded other southern areas in Austria-Hungary. Romania laid claim to Transylvania and its marches. In 1915 and 1916 the Entente promised these regions to Italy, Serbia and Romania, to induce them to join hostilities or to boost their war effort. Of the enemy Great Powers, Russia alone made territorial demands on Austria-Hungary. In keeping with long-standing ambitions, Petrograd demanded the eastern provinces inhabited by Ukrainians and Ruthenes and also wished to attach Polish-inhabited Western Galicia to an autonomous Poland within Russia.

As for the future of the rest of Austria-Hungary, wedged between Poland, Greater Romania and Greater Serbia, Russian foreign policy showed some hesitation at first. Immediately before and after the outbreak of hostilities, Czar Nicholas himself repeatedly stated that Austria-Hungary was not likely to survive the territorial concessions it would be forced to make.[2] Grand Duke Alexei, the Chief of the General Staff, argued that Austria-Hungary would have to be divided up into states that served Russian purposes.[3] Other members of the military and political leadership agreed. Foreign Minister Sazonov, however, made mutually contradictory declarations. Addressing the emissaries of the Allied Powers on September 14th 1914, he argued that after the war the Habsburg Empire must be turned into a kingdom consisting of three member states, Austria, Bohemia and Hungary. Maurice Paléologue, the French Ambassador in St Petersburg, noted on January 1st 1915 that according to Sazonov Austria–Hungary must be dismembered.[4] These approaches and discussions finally, in 1916, led to a decision to plan for a complete dissolution of the Empire and the creation of new nation-states. Of Austria, Hungary and Bohemia, Russia wished to establish the closest ties with the last named. Hungary's lot, however, would have been nothing more or better than that of a vassal state.

The revolutions in 1917 and the separate peace concluded by Russia saved Eastern Central Europe from Russian influence. Of the future victors dispensing justice, only the Western Allies, Great Britain and France stayed on their feet and the United States, which joined them in 1917.

Unlike Russia, the Western Allies had no clearly formulated and final position on the future of the Habsburg Empire in the early stages of the war. The national principle was allowed only where, and to the degree, that it offered obvious advantages in terms of power relations. This was the case as regards Romania and Serbia, but a number of territorial promises were made to the Italians which could not, or only barely, be shored up by the ethnic argument.

It is precisely this uncertainty that is reflected in a secret document prepared by Foreign Office advisers in August 1916, and approved by the Prime Minister that autumn, the first to contain comprehensive proposals for territorial arrangements after the war was victoriously concluded. This plan considered it to be in the most obvious British interest to limit the influence and expansion of the Germanic powers and of Russia in the eastern half of Europe. "For that reason, and also with the more general object of arriving at a durable settlement, we must bear in mind the two principles of nationality and of reasonable economic facilities..." The possibility that the Allies might save the Habsburg Empire, as they had done in 1849, was not excluded. A more desirable scenario would be, however, if the nations were given a free rein and the Empire fell apart in keeping with their ideas. A powerful South Slav federation, centred on Belgrade, was essential, bearing in mind the strategic interests of the British Empire, since this could be a barrier in the way of the German *Drang nach Osten.* An Austria presumed to be part of Germany, an independent Hungary and an independent Romania, plus an independent Bohemia which could possibly be joined to a Poland under the aegis of Russia or to the South-Slav state would share the rest.[5] Lord Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, informed the Americans about to enter the war in a like spirit in April 1917. "Three states would be formed from the Austrian–Hungarian Empire: Bohemia, Hungary and Austria."[6] It must be stressed, however, that notions of a preservation of the Danubian Empire were linked to ideas of modernization, democratization and federalization. Thus on 10th February 1917, the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, himself declared: "We have no policy of sheer dismemberment, but we must stand by the nationalities of our Allies such as Romanians, the Slavs, the Serbians and the Italians".[7] A year later, on January 4th 1918, he moved a resolution passed by the War Cabinet, that "Austria-Hungary should be in a position to exercise a powerful influence in South-East Europe."[8]

In the first half of the war French government policy too hesitated. The preservation of the Habsburg Empire rather than its complete liquidation was considered desirable. In an early 1915 dispatch, Maurice Paléologue, the French ambassador to Russia, reporting a conversation with the Foreign Minister, said that Austria was the only question on which their opinions differed. As long as there was a Germany and an Italy, the continued existence of Austria was in the French interest. Philipe Berthelot who, of all the high-ranking French diplomats had the least sympathy for Austria-Hungary, and who happened to be Eduard Beneš's close friend, advised his Foreign Minister on August 16th 1916, in connection with the raising of a Czech Legion, that the time had not come yet to decide on

the future of Bohemia. Finally one might refer to the Comité national d'études sociales et politiques, established to formulate French peace aims. In 1916, after a prolonged and heated debate, they decided that it was the federalization and not the dissolution of Austria-Hungary that was in the French interest.[9]

In the course of 1917, a number of French plans relating to the concrete arrangements of a federalization of Austria-Hungary were drawn up. One of these shows how keenly aware of the problems the advisers of the French General Staff were. Their fifty-page compilation stresses that if the Habsburg Empire fell apart into its elements this would only facilitate things for Germany. A congerie of small independent states, jealous of each other and without access to the sea, would compete with each other for the favours of their powerful neighbour. The slogan must therefore be not *delenda Austria* but *constituenda Austria,* as an association of independent and democratic states though still under the sceptre of the Habsburgs. The future empire would consist of four national and one multiethnic territorial units: Austria, Bohemia (Czech and Moravian regions but without Slovakia), "Lesser" Hungary, Croatia (made up of the Croat, Slovene, Serbian and Dalmatian parts) and Transylvania. The Bukovina would be shared between Russia and Romania, and Galicia between Russia and Poland. It was proposed that the promises made to Italy and Serbia in 1915 should be kept only in part. Italy would be given the Tyrol and Gorizia but not Istria or Northern Dalmatia, since these latter were essential to the Habsburg Empire. The author argued that making a single state out of the culturally diversified South Slav territories would be a gross error. Serbia would be given Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Southern Dalmatia, including Cattaro (Kotor), but not the integral and predominantly Catholic territories of Austria-Hungary. The material concluded by pointing out that, after three years of war it was time to give more thought to French interests. The peace with honour which the French deserved must not be allowed to be delayed by more or less intransigent Serbian or Romanian demands.[10]

Proposals by the General Staff and other pro-Austrian conservative monarchists were naturally vehemently attacked by radical free thinkers, many of whom were Freemasons. Echoing Masaryk and Beneš, they demanded that Austria-Hungary be broken up, at the time, however, without much success. Right up to the end of 1917, the French government hesitated to come to a decision on the future of the Danubian empire.[11]

From the American vantage point Europe, and particularly the Danube basin, was of much smaller importance than for the French or the United Kingdom. That no single European power of alliance should dominate the whole of the continent and thus the world, was an axiom of American as much as of British policy. That Germany must not be allowed to win the war, or to dominate in any other way, had already been stated by Secretary of State Robert Lansing on July 11th 1915, that is over two years before America joined the Allies. The point of contention in America was therefore not the strategic objective but how this—the restoration of the continental balance of power and the keeping in check of Germany—could be

attained and ensured. President Wilson, in his Fourteen Points, which he issued on January 8th 1918, committed himself not to the break up of Austria-Hungary but only to extensive rights to autonomy of the nations which inhabited it. Accordingly, the member of the American committee preparing peace proposals responsible for Central Europe in April 1918, in a draft proposal, spoke of a confederation of five states that would make up Austria. It is true, however, that Secretary of State Lansing at no time shared such notions. A diary entry dated January 10th 1918 reads: "Germany must not be permitted to win this war or to break even."[12]

Late in 1917 and early in 1918 three events put an end to such hesitations and uncertainties. The first was the October Revolution in Russia and the March 1918 Peace of Brest Litovsk. This meant the loss of the major eastern ally and a confrontation with the eastern outlines of the *Mitteleuropa* of the future. The essence of this *neue Ordnung* was the detachment from Russia of all western territories acquired since the time of Peter the Great, and the creation in this region of German vassal nation-states. The second new development was the scandalous conclusion, on April 12th 1918, of negotiations for a separate peace engaged in by the young Austrian Emperor Charles, who had succeeded Francis Joseph in 1916, that is the publication of the fact that Austria was prepared to accept the return to France of Alsace-Lorraine. This put the Emperor in an impossible position, even more at the mercy of his German ally. The third was the signing on May 14th and 15th of an agreement providing for long-term political, military and economic cooperation between Germany and Austria-Hungary. This was interpreted in Washington, London and Paris as showing that Austria-Hungary was finally committed to the German interest, being thus unable to carry out that balance-ensuring which many still had in mind in 1917–1918. Lord Hardinge expressed this in a diary entry dated May 23rd 1918, when he noted that all efforts to detach Austria had failed as the meeting of the two emperors resulted in an ever closer German dominance. They must carry on fighting, he concluded, and do their best to encourage the subjugated nations to rebel against German-Hungarian dominance. After the spring of 1918, the issue for the Entente was therefore no longer whether or not Austria-Hungary would survive but the location of the new states that would replace it.

The Allies, first on June 3rd 1918, issued a joint declaration of support for the independence of Poland. This had already been mentioned in President Wilson's January Fourteen Points and in speeches by French and British statesmen around that time. The Poles had, after the fall of Napoleon, repeatedly attempted to regain their independence but the hopes they had put in western support had proved vain. Now, after the fall of the Russian Empire, they finally obtained this absolutely essential support. In the spring and summer of 1918 the French asked for a joint Allied declaration of support for the independence not only of Poland but also of Czechoslovakia and a South Slav state, and for the recognition of the committee of South Slav exiles which was about to be constituted as a government. British procrastination and the stubborn opposition of Italy, which looked on a future

South Slav state as a rival, torpedoed this. Thus, on June 29th, France, acting alone, recognized the Czechoslovak National Council headed by Masaryk and Beneš as the legitimate representative of the Czech and Slovak nation and the basis of the government of a future Czechoslovak state. The British only decided on a like step on August 9th and the United States on September 3rd. Because of Italian opposition the South Slavs were not given similar recognition before the end of hostilities. This, however, does not alter the fact that, together with Poland, Czechoslovakia and Greater Romania, a greater South Slav state figured amongst the peace aims of the Allies. Details were then settled at the negotiating tables of the Peace Conference in Paris, and in local wars between the interested parties.

The 1919/20 Peace Conference held in Paris and its environs established four new states on the territory of Austria-Hungary: Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbians, Croats and Slovenes, the future Yugoslavia. In addition Poland, Romania and Italy received a share of the Habsburg Empire. The declared principle of the peace treaties establishing the new states and drawing up the new frontiers was national self-determination. Other considerations, however, economic, strategic and even plain land hunger also played a part, so that the final arrangement did not accord with the ethnic-national principle even in the measure that the notoriously confused ethnographic demography of the region would have allowed. This too contributed to a new world war barely twenty years after the end of the first. ❧

## NOTES

1 ■ Quoted by Wilfried Fest: *Peace or Partition. The Habsburg Monarchy and British Policy 1914–1918.* New York, 1978. p.1.

2 ■ Tibor Hajdu: "Russian War Aims Concerning Hungary during World War I" In: *20th Century Hungary and the Great Powers.* Ed. by Ignác Romsics, Highland Lakes, N.J. 1995, Atlantic Research and Publications, Inc. pp. 32–33.

3 ■ Quoted by Merrit Abeash: "War Aims toward Austria-Hungary: The Czechoslovak Pivot." in: *Russian Diplomacy and Eastern Europe 1914–1917.* Ed. by Henry I. Roberts. New York, 1963, p. 96.

4 ■ Maurice Paléologue: *La Russie des Tsars pendant la Grande Guerre.* Paris, 1921. vol. 1. pp. 246–247.

5 ■ Public Record Office, London. Cabinet 19/1.

6 ■ Quoted by Sándor Taraszovics: "American Peace Preparations during World War I and the Shaping of the New Hungary". In: *20th Century Hungary and the Great Powers*, op.cit. p. 77.

7 ■ Wilfried Fest, op.cit. p. 60.

8 ■ Public Record Office, London. Cabinet 23/5. pp. 14–15.

9 ■ Edit Marjanovic: *Die Habsburger Monarchie in Politik und öffentlicher Meinung Frankreichs 1914–1918.* Wien, Salzburg, 1984. pp. 3–56.

10 ■ *Archives Diplomatiques, Paris. Guerre 1914–1918. Autriche-Hongrie.* Vol. 151. *La situation politique en Autriche-Hongrie et ses conséquences.* 23 7, 1917.

11 ■ See François Fejtő: *Requiem pour un empire défunt. Histoire de la distruction de l'Autriche-Hongrie.* Dover, 1988. pp. 305–364.

12 ■ Robert Lansing: *War Memoirs of Robert Lansing, Secretary of State.* Indianapolis, 1935. p. 21.

13 ■ Arday Lajos: *Térkép csata után.* Budapest, 1990. p. 66.

14 ■ Kalervo Hovi: *Cordon sanitaire ou barriere de l'Est?* Turku, 1975, pp. 129–131.

László Szarka

# A Protecting Power without Teeth

## The Minorities Created by the Trianon Peace Treaty

As far as Hungary was concerned, the territorial and constitutional changes which took place in Eastern Central Europe after the Great War in a brief four or five months after the cessation of hostilities, were sealed by the signing of what has become known as the Peace of Trianon on June 4th 1920, nineteen months after Austria-Hungary had agreed to an armistice at Padua.[1] What I propose to discuss, basing myself on the official Hungarian brief, primarily the notes submitted to the Peace Conference by the Hungarian delegation, are three connected questions: to what extent was Hungarian negotiating strategy and the attitude of the Hungarian delegation determined by consideration for the interests of Hungarian minorities, which would now find themselves outside the country's frontiers; what alternative options were worked out in support of these minorities to alleviate the blow and to guarantee their rights; and finally, what were the major reasons for Hungary's failure as the protective power for Hungarian minorities, a role which she assumed from the start.

Before attempting to answer the first question on the basis of notes submitted by the delegation headed by Count Albert Apponyi in 1920 and other connected documents, the context must be made clear. Hungary was invited to send a delegation to the Peace Conference in December 1919, one year after the War had ended. In the winter of 1918/19, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the South Slavs had occupied two thirds of the country. The short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic followed and the occupation—and eventual evacuation—by Romania of Budapest and much of the rest of the country. Although there was every indi-

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cation that the Peace Conference had no intention of changing the new frontiers—of which Clemenceau had informed the Hungarian Soviet Government in June 1919—the Hungarian delegation hoped that they could convince the Great Powers that the principle of self-determination proclaimed by President Wilson, as well as regional stability which was in the interests of both victors and vanquished, conflicted with the exaggerated demands of neighbouring countries. Even in its introductory note, the Hungarian delegation pointed to this basic contradiction in the territorial decisions taken by the Peace Conference.

> The world peace about to be concluded is based on two ideas: the right to self-determination and the manifest presence of ethnic cohesion. There is no doubt that one principle applied without the other must produce injustices that cry to the heavens.[2]

Reference to the close connection between, and inseparability of the two basic principles in itself, did not identify the ethnic principle as something on which stable long-lasting states could be based. The Hungarian delegation called on a great variety of arguments against an ethnic arrangement that excluded self-determination, all the way from the traditions of a multi-national country to the advantages offered by economic integration and autonomy promised to national minorities in Hungary, up to that cultural superiority which was doubtless present at the time, but which was of doubtful value as an argument, and finally, the dire consequences of the new arrangements.

The Hungarian notes to the Peace Conference repeatedly articulated the right of Hungarians and non-Hungarians within the Carpathians to a plebiscite. In an address to the Peace Conference on January 16th, Count Apponyi, referring to Wilson's principle of self-determination, demanded a plebiscite in all those parts of pre-war Hungary which "they now wanted to detach" adding "I declare that even in anticipation we will accept the results of such plebiscites, whatever they may be."[3] Calling for plebiscites from the start throws doubts on the sort of biassed interpretation of the arguments of the Hungarian delegation which takes it to be anachronistically committed to the integrity of the country, short-sightedly excluding the option of negotiating tactics. This becomes all the more apparent if we bear in mind that the Hungarian notes to the Peace Conference emphasized the formulation of minority rights. No doubt, the Hungarian position in this respect was not free of contradictions. Taking the new frontiers as outlined in Clemenceau's June 1919 note as his starting point, Apponyi pointed out that

> if the worst comes to the worst and territorial changes will be forced on us, I ask that the defence of national minority rights be more effectively and more concretely secured than planned in the peace proposals handed to us.[4]

Of the minority agreements within the Versailles peace arrangements, those that referred to Hungarians outside the Trianon frontiers were the minority rights obligations included in the Peace Treaty with Austria as well as treaties covering minority rights with Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes

and Romania. As the extensive literature on international minority rights protection published between the Wars shows, all that these minority rights agreements concluded on the initiative of the US achieved was an absolute minimum necessary for survival as a community and native language culture.

That was also the judgement of the delegation headed by Count Albert Apponyi. Its position and proposals regarding national minority rights are summed up in Note XXIII to the Peace Conference. Agreement is expressed for the rights of minorities within Hungary, indicating that Hungarian legislation and traditions were in accord with what the draft peace treaty expected of the Hungarian government. At the same time, the note forcefully demanded that the Peace Treaty with Hungary should include measures for the protection of the rights of Hungarian and other (such as Slovak, Ruthenian or Saxon) minorities in neighbouring countries.

> Equity, humanity and the will to achieve a lasting peace demand that racial, linguistic and religious minorities in territories taken from Hungary should enjoy the most effective protection of the Great Powers, of the guardians of world peace and culture, and that the peace treaty to be concluded with Hungary should offer firm guarantees for the defence of national minority interests, since such guarantees alone can guard them against the excesses and violence of intolerant power, which would otherwise be unavoidable.[5]

The note also made itemized and textual proposals. Considerable emphasis was given to the autonomy of the churches and guarantees for the continuity of their organizational, institutional and property-owning structures. The absence of these was to have dire consequences for all minorities in the region at a much later date. The proposal provided for the immediate incorporation of minority communities, this being the only way in which the minorities could establish charity, religious, social, cultural and educational institutions at their own expense, which would have made it possible for them to nurture their language, culture and faith in freedom. Wide minority autonomy referred to the use of the native language in dealing with the authorities and in the courts. It also aimed to secure proportionate participation in legislation, in local government, in the government and in national authorities. That particular Hungarian note was aimed to make it impossible to take any measures designed to serve assimilation, the confiscation of minority property and any kind of discrimination.

A note by the Hungarian delegation with reference to Transylvania also severely criticized the inadequacy of the legal guarantees provided by the minority rights treaties. It was pointed out that these were unable to protect what was specific to Transylvania, since they narrowly confined themselves to the specific interests of linguistic, racial and religious minorities. Furthermore, the absence of sanctions and of any protection for economic interests, the opposed interests of Romania, a country on which one could not rely, threw doubt on the value of the minority protection treaties in the eyes of the Hungarian delegation.

> It is our conviction that it is not the rights of the minority but only the national neutrality of the state that could provide a satisfactory solution for the Transylvanian question.[6]

The constitutional solution would be the independence of Transylvania and the national neutrality of the state, with the participation of equal nations of equal constitutional status. The note suggested that Transylvania be divided into four kinds of territories, preponderantly Hungarian, preponderantly Romanian, preponderantly Saxon or Swabian, and of a lingustically mixed character. These would enjoy far-reaching local autonomy, central power being based on the equal representation of the three nations and on a trilingual administration. As a basic principle the note referred to the right to self-determination of Hungarians and Transylvanians. A stable arrangement in Transylvania could not be based on the right to self-determination of one of the nations living there to the exclusion of the self-determination of the others.

> If the rights of two peoples cannot be simultaneously asserted in one area, or if these two rights mutually exclude each other, then what becomes necessary is either mutual agreement or other principles must be resorted to, principles that must be considered when the question is decided.[7]

Hungarian foreign policy at the Peace Conference expressed that Hungary willy-nilly found herself in the role of the protective power of the Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries without, however, disposing of the means, as e.g. support by the Great Powers, or the well-intentioned neutrality or tacit support of an ally or two amongst the neighbours. Furthermore, the new frontiers and lines of demarcation, economic impotence and domestic chaos indicated that the country itself was totally defenceless. This means that the articulation in notes submitted to the Peace Conference of the Hungarian position was at most of documentary or historical value.

The text of the Hungarian Peace Treaty as finalized by the Allies was accompanied by what is known as the Millerand Letter. To quote:

> The demographic situation in Central Europe is truly such as to make it impossible for frontiers to coincide with ethnic boundaries all along the line. It follows—and the Allied and Associated Powers regretfully had to bow to the necessity—that certain focal points of the Hungarian ethnicity had to find themselves under the sovereignity of another state. It is, however, wrong to cite this situation as evidence that it would have been better to leave the old territorial arrangements undisturbed. The existing order of things, even if a thousand years old, does not legitimize the future, if it is found to be unjust.[8]

Thus Millerand explains the genesis of Hungarian minorities more than three million strong in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. Placing the emphasis on the ethnically mixed nature of settlement in Eastern Central Europe, with all its problems, that is on the objective situation, is a persuasive argument, but even with eighty years' hindsight it appears as biassed and prejudiced.

But it is also a fact that there were clearly discernible linguistic borders between Hungarians and Slovaks, Hungarians and Ruthenians and, in certain areas, even between Hungarians and Romanians and Hungarians and Serbians. In addition the Hungarian–Slovak linguistic border was of the sharp type where a transitional mixed zone more than a village or two deep is rare.

But as Millerand himself points out, the Peace Conference itself, because of numerous other considerations, made no effort to give the objective ethnic data of the Carpathian basin any sort of real weight.

The synergism of a number of factors proved extraordinarily important for the future of these three million Hungarians. In the absence of pre-1918 ethno-regional traditions and inner dividing lines manifest in administrative arrangements, as it became apparent later, notes containing demands submitted to the Peace Conference, as well as notions of strategy proved the starting point when the frontiers were drawn. When negotiating the Czechoslovak, South Slav and Romanian territorial demands (largely based on war-time promises) when the actual frontier was drawn up, as a rule, Hungarians were faced with a choice between the bad and the worse.

The French, British, Italian and American delegations, asserting their own spheres of interests and ad hoc interests were, at most, prepared to renounce territorial demands that could be described as excessive, at points where there were disputes between them concerning the new frontiers of Hungary. Thus the ethnically purely Hungarian Grosse Schütt Danube island (Csallóköz) was allotted to Czechoslovakia because the French, giving way to the Americans and Italians, did not insist on Czechoslovakia being given the northern Hungarian coal basin and industrial area. In exchange the Americans no longer insisted that the Grosse Schütt stay with Hungary.[9]

Millerand, openly acknowledging bias in his ominous letter, pointed to a fatally polarized choice between the integrity of Hungary in its pre-war frontiers and the demands of the new allied small powers. In fact plans and suggestions, paying closer attention to the ethnic realities of the region, were present both in the deliberations of the Peace Conference and in proposals by the Hungarian government suggesting alternative solutions.

At the conclusion of the Great War, the Hungarian political class was well aware that the territorial integrity of pre-War Hungary could only be preserved with the effective support of one or the other of the victorious Great Powers.

All Hungarian administrations in office between October 1918 and June 1920 truly tried all possible means to influence and modify territorial decisions relating to Hungary which were taken by the Peace Conference in February/March 1919 and which, in the event, proved to be final. In order to obtain the most favourable negotiating position possible and in the interests of securing concessions, the Hungarians therefore to some extent insisted on the principle of territorial integrity but also did their best to work out the kind of provisional agree-

ments on which they could fall back if they were forced to give up the principle of territorial integrity.

It is only in this context that the decision on principle of the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference makes sense, that any kind of correction of the frontiers established for Hungary would—given the balance of power in the region—produce something even more unfavourable for Hungary. In the same way, the Great Powers paid no attention whatever to efforts by the Hungarian delegation to protect the rights of minorities.[10]

Plebiscites were employed within the Versailles Peace arrangements only on four occasions, pace all the efforts of the Hungarian delegation to the Peace Conference and only once in relation to Hungary, when the fate of the city of Sopron (Oedenburg) and environs was so decided. There was good reason why the ongoing coordination of the stance adopted by the Czechoslovak, South Slav and Romanian delegations was perhaps at its most forceful and systematic when it came to opposing the very idea of plebiscites.[11]

There can hardly be any doubt that in areas and cities or towns where Hungarians were in the majority, plebiscites—whatever the circumstances under which they were held—would have produced essential changes to the frontiers drawn up by the Peace Conference. It is a fact, however, that the Hungarian delegation in Paris urged plebiscites not only for territories which were beyond any doubt ethnically Hungarian but also for such areas allotted to Czechoslovakia, Romania or the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, where the population was ethnically mixed, or where the majority was made up by an ethnic group (Germans, Ruthenes) not directly involved in the territorial dispute, not to mention the entire German-inhabited western march (Deutsch West-Ungarn).[12]

The minority rights protection treaties were signed by all three successor states. The results were favourable in Czechoslovakia and, to some degree, in Romania, primarily in rights of language use, the survival of a minimal network of Hungarian cultural and educational institutions, and the legal position of churches and other denominations whose members belonged to ethnic minorities. Czechoslovakia endeavoured to embody the basic principles of international minority treaties in domestic regulation, Romania and Yugoslavia on the other hand did their best to limit the validity of such treaties. This difference manifested itself particularly in the scope given to the political parties of the Hungarian minority.[13]

It should not however be forgotten that the position of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia was eased by the fact that Masaryk and his successors were forced to make the greatest concessions in view of the three and a half million German minority which, particularly in the thirties, when instrumentalized by Hitler, caused them many headaches.

All the three Hungarian minorities did their best to exploit to the full all the opportunities offered by League of Nations minority rights protection. Interesting-

ly enough submissions by Hungarians from Romania proved the most successful, forcing the Bucharest government into second thoughts regarding a number of measures directed against a minority. This applied in particular to land reforms which took place in all three successor states and was specially important in dealing with grievances arising from the subjection of schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction to supervision by the state.

Between the two wars the basic conditions for the autonomy of the Hungarian minority were provided by commerce organized on an ethnic basis and by schools that imbued education with a national spirit. A comprehensive regulation of minority rights was given high priority by the government in Budapest right from the start. True enough, between the wars, the hope of a revision of the frontiers was never abandoned. Hungary attempted to negotiate bilateral minority rights agreements with all three neighbours but, as the arguments used by Czechoslovakia when rejecting such feelers made clear, not one of the successor states considered their national minorities within Hungary to be of sufficient importance to warrant the granting of reciprocal rights, sanctioned by a treaty in supervising the implementation of minority rights. From then on the Hungarian government used the facilities of the League of Nations, the Interparliamentary Union and other international organizations to act in support of Hungarian minorities, leaving no doubt in anyone's mind, however, that a revision of the frontiers offered the only genuine solution. Hungarian historians will continue to argue over the true nature of Hungarian revisionist foreign policy. The present consensus appears to be that for most Hungarian governments integral revision was a bargaining ploy. It is certainly true that, at least after the unsuccessful 1921 to 1923 bilateral negotiations, Hungarian foreign policy was primarily concerned with the recovery of Hungarian-inhabited territories, concentrating on what was called ethnic revision.

The autonomous organization of the Hungarian minorities between the Wars did not imply integration in the new states. Numerous reasons could be listed, starting with long-standing conflicts going back to well before 1918, going on to the Trianon peace arrangements which the greater part of Hungarians in the successor states felt to be unjust, to neglecting to learn the language of the country of their new citizenship, discriminative practices by the executive, legislative and judicial authorities and the state of tension between Hungary and its neighbours which persisted throughout. The successor states defined themselves as nation-states from the start. Their constitutions, political institutions and legislation gave scant scope to minorities. In such circumstances the loyalty of minority citizens and communities was of a low intensity indeed. Not even Czechoslovakia, whose national policy was relatively liberal, was able to improve the situation significantly in this respect.

The oppositional stance taken to the new states proved an important community-building factor early on, but in time passive resistance became a source of

important losses for the Hungarian minorities. Public servants who refused to take the oath of allegiance required by their employment were dismissed. Many resettled in Hungary swelling the number of refugees (around three hundred thousand).

In the case of all three Hungarian minorities, a new sort of regionalism that grew out of parochialism and provincialism expressed a higher stage of community identity. Within a very short time a sort of heroic sense of mission was born (a peculiar minority adaptation of Transylvanianism, the vox humana in Slovakia or the awakening of a consciousness of Danubian solidarity). Recognizing the need, community building thus produced a kind of social psychological tuning in the case of all three communities as a response to the challenge of an unprecedented new situation.

All this was made much more difficult by the initial prohibition and later hindering of contacts with the mother country, with Budapest of central importance. Such contacts were only well organized on the highest political level, but otherwise pretty ad hoc and awkward. The relationship between Hungary and the Hungarian minorities often changed, and considerably changed in the course of the past seventy-five years. Between the two wars a sensation of isolation and annihilation no doubt predominated. Putting an end to that was the principal aim. In Hungarian revisionist propaganda, in official Hungarian policy, and also in the arts Trianon was evil incarnate. It would therefore deserve special study why nevertheless a radical Hungarian irredentism, which many predicted, enjoyed such minimal support amongst Hungarians in the successor states.

The second major group of factors influencing the organization of minorities consists of the political, economic and cultural rights guaranteed by the new states, including the attitude of the majority to the minorities.

The fluctuations in the interwar position of the Hungarian minorities produced by Trianon manifested all the problems of the Peace Treaty. Trianon no doubt did not merely give its blessing to the right to self-determination of non-Hungarians in pre-war Hungary. The territorial arrangements of the Peace Treaty, primarily decisions refering to the frontiers of Hungary which closely affected the members of the Hungarian minorities, expressed the strategic and economic objectives of the victorious Great Powers and of the small nations in Eastern Central Europe allied to them, rather than serving to prepare the judgment of an impartial referee.

The attempts to provide solutions during the Second World War and the years that followed are evidence that the relations of the peoples of the Carpathian Basin cannot be mechanically arranged by re-drawing frontiers, in localised wars with exchanges of populations, deportations and ethnic cleansing without all the risks that go with a war. Every such violent experiment gives rise to new grievances and conflicts. In the last resort both victor and vanquished suffer the consequences of every kind of homogenization.

The end of Communism offers the Hungarian minorities—as against ever accelerating assimilation—new opportunities for organizing themselves that had to be done without for fifty years, the chance to elaborate new demands for, and techniques of, cultural and local autonomy, and also the chance of a new kind of relationship both with the majority nations in their countries and with Hungary, a relationship based on total openness and on the ongoing reconciliation of interests. The Trianon certificate of origin of the Hungarian minorities will no doubt lose its defining importance when the frontiers of the small states in the region become as symbolic as they already have been in the daily life of the happier parts of Europe. ❧

## NOTES

1 ■ For documents on the operation of the Hungarian peace delegation see: *A magyar béketárgyalások. Jelentés a magyar békeküldöttség működéséről Neuilly s/S.-ben 1920 január-március havában.* I-III/a-b. Vols. Budapest 1920–1921. (Hungarian Peace Negotiations. Report on the activities of the Hungarian peace delegation in Neuilly sur Seine January-March 1920) Quotation from Vol. I p. 7. More recent publications on the preliminaries of Trianon include: Béla K. Király, Peter Pastor, Ivan Sanders (eds.): *Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking. A Case Study on Trianon.* (War and Society in East Central Europe VI; East European Monographs CV.) New York, Brooklyn College Press—Columbia University Press, 1982; Mária Ormos: *From Padua to Trianon,* Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1991; Stephen Borsody (ed.): *The Hungarians: A Divided Nation.* New Haven, Yale Center for International Area Studies, 1988; József Galántai: *A trianoni békekötés 1920. A párizsi meghívástól a ratifikálásig (Peacemaking at Trianon 1920. From the Invitation to Paris to the Ratification.* Budapest, Gondolat, 1990; Béla K. Király—László Veszprémy (eds.): *Trianon and East Central Europe.* (War and Society in East Central Europe XXXII; East European Monographs (CDXVIII.) New York, Brooklyn College Press—Columbia University Press, 1995— There were also important publications of sources in the 1990s: Magda Ádám–György Litván–Mária Ormos (eds.): *Documents diplomatiques français sur l'histoire du bassin des Carpates 1918–1922.* Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993; György Litván (ed.): *Trianon felé. A győztes nagyhatalmak tárgyalásai Magyarországról. (Paul Mantoux tolmácstiszt feljegyzései.)* (Towards Trianon. Negotiations by the victorious powers on Hungary. [Notes by the Interpreter Paul Mantoux]). Budapest, MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1998; Magda Ádám–Mária Ormos (eds.) *Francia diplomáciai iratok a Kárpát-medence történetéről 1918–1919* (French Diplomatic Papers on the History of the Carpathian Basin). Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1999; On national minority aspects of the peace treaties see e.g. Artúr Balogh: *A kisebbségek nemzetközi védelme a kisebbségi szerződések és a békeszerződések alapján* (The International Protection of Minorities on the Basis of Minority and Peace Treaties). Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc) Magyar Kisebbség Könyvtára, Kájoni, 1997. (2nd ed.), József Galántai: *Trianon and the Protection of Minorities,* New York, 1991.

2 ■ In continuation the note made promises on the autonomy to be offered to national minorities in Hungary. "The Hungarian nation, however, freed from the fatal compromising situation into which it was swept by its relationship with the Austrian Empire, having fully regained its right to self-determination, will happily grant that autonomy, as we now solemnly declare." *A magyar béketárgyalások,* Vol. I. op. cit. p.10.

3 ■ loc. cit. p. 278.

4 ■ loc. cit. p. 279.

5 ■ loc. cit. Vol. II p. 78. On minority rights treaties see József Galántai: *Trianon,* op. cit. 89–109.

6 ■ *A magyar béketárgyalások,* op. cit. Vol. I, p. 131.

7 ■ loc. cit. p. 131. The Transylvanian note of the Hungarian peace delegation argued that, in the post-war situation an independent Transylvanian state would best serve to overcome Hungaro-Roumanian

differences as well as ethnic disputes within Transylvania. The latter would, however, have to be settled quite apart from the constitutional issue. According to the note, the minority protection legislation forced on Roumania was not suitable. In terms of the independent Transylvania adumbrated, the note projected wide governmental and administrative autonomy for the four national areas. "In the central government of Transylvania and its agencies trilingualism must be the governing principle, in the central legislature equal representation for the three nations and an electoral system based on national registers." loc. cit. p. 133. Further Hungarian notes dealt with the requirements. Appendix 15 "The special position of Transylvania from the point of view of minority protection" of the principal note on minorities protection. Loc. cit. Vol. II. pp. 129–133.

8 ■ Loc. cit. Vol. II, p. 487. According to Millerand: "It is true that the Hungarian delegation uses the absence of plebiscites in the peace conditions as an argument. If the Allied and Associated Powers considered it superfluous to thus consult the people, this was because they were convinced that if such a plebiscite could fully assure an honest expression of opinion, the result would be no different to what the Powers discovered following a thorough examination of the ethnography and the national aspirations of Central Europe. The will of the peoples was manifest in October and November 1918, at the time of the collapse of the dual monarchy, when the long oppressed national minorities joined their Italian, Rumanian, Yugoslav or Czecho-Slovak brothers."

9 ■ Magda Ádám–György Litván–Mária Ormos (eds.): *Documents diplomatiques français,* op. cit. p. 76–94.

10 ■ "... the Powers opine that the interests of the people living along the frontiers are fully assured. As regards the Hungarian isolated areas which will find themselves under such sovereignty, treaties defending the rights of minorities already signed by Rumania and by the Kingdom of Serbians, Croats and Slovenes, and ratified by the Czecho-Slovak state, fully guarantee their interests." loc. cit. p. 488.

11 ■ The February 24th 1920 joint Czechoslovak–Yugoslav–Romanian note is published in the original by Ion Ardeleanu – Vasile Arimia – Mirceau Musta (eds.): *Desăvîrşirea unităţii naţional-statale a poporului Român. Recunoaşterea ei internaţională,* 1918. Vol. VI. *Documente interne şi externe, februárie 1920–decembrie 1920* (The Achievement of the National and Political Unity of the Romanian People. 1918. Its International Recognition Vol. VI. Domestic and Foreign Documents. February 1920–December 1920). Bucureşti 1986, p. 32–42.

12 ■ This is pointed out by Map VI amongst the cartographic appendices to the notes submitted by the Hungarian delegation. It shows not only the limitrophe Hungarian zone allotted to Czechoslovakia, Romania, the Kingdom of Serbians, Croats and Slovenes and Austria, but also the Ruthenian, Banatian and Bácska mixed population areas, as regions that should be borne in mind when the frontiers drawn by the powers are corrected in accordance with the Hungarian demands.

13 ■ On the protection of minorities see Artúr Balogh: *A kisebbségek* (The Minorities), op. cit.; Zoltán Baranyai: *A kisebbségi jogok védelmének kézikönyve* (A Handbook of Minority Rights Protection), Berlin, 1925, 2nd revised edition); Lajos Nagy: *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzete Nagyromániában* (The Constitutional Position of Minorities in Greater Romania) Kolozsvár (Cluj) 1944. (Reprint ed. Székelyudvarhely [Odorheiu] 1944.) etc.

Lóránt Kabdebó

# Lőrinc Szabó – a Poet of his Century

(1900–1957)

"My wife says I am a monster, a man impossible to understand. Indeed, even I don't understand how I could write these latest poems—there are already 39 of them. My body is a failure, my heart barely beats, my spirit is weak and frail, my intellect, however, or at least some central part of it, its very core, is imperishable. This is what has kept me going, this is what has shown me the way. This is what has written my poems, too, these new ones. It has dealt with topics completely different in nature, different in mood, different in problems, ignoring my head bulging with mighty concerns, as if there were no trouble with me at all!! It is frightening indeed. Or am I a madman, am I a child?" runs one of the diary entries by one of the great Hungarian poets of the twentieth century, Lőrinc Szabó. "Turning the world into words only makes sense if it adds something to our lives, makes it stronger, 'more harmonic', or whatever—otherwise it's only some childish fancy. [...] away with tumors of the spirit unless they are useful as an incentive to produce art," he writes in a letter to his wife in April, 1951. An earlier entry in his diary exclaims, "They haven't yet realized, only some of them, what I mean to Hungarian poetry. [...] Hungarian poetry speaks my language. They have no idea how much I mean to it!!" In January, 1944, he boasts to a German friend: "I have received more acknowledgement recently than I had all my life. Both left-wing and right-wing figures (as much as these categories apply to my person at all) seem to grasp and appreciate my interpretation of 'poésie pure'. I have been awarded three poetry prizes within six weeks, by three radically different lots—a thousand, three thousand, and eight thousand pengős. Without making any effort to this end."

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Looking back now, Lőrinc Szabó, who died over forty years ago, has at last been granted the honour due to him as one of the leading Hungarian poets of his century. He had been refused admittance to the pantheon because of a dichotomy in his life. His radically right-wing articles and political utterances from before and during the Second World War were not forgotten, and with good reason. Szabó, however, kept his poetry strictly separated from his political views and activism and clung to the right to ask questions and to be sceptical. It was due to this that he was allowed to be a journalist after 1945 (work, however, which he abandoned in favour of becoming the foremost literary translator of his time instead). In the Communist era, on the other hand, the same attitude, his poetic rigour and wariness of politics, his refusal to follow the "line" made it impossible for him to get his works published. He was only able to publish his translations, just like fellow poets such as Sándor Weöres, Ágnes Nemes Nagy, László Kálnoky, Zoltán Jékely, Sándor Rákos, et al.

His poetic achievement is that of a stubborn and consistent artist who questions the existence of a one and only Truth precisely by his incessant search for truth, and whose faith is shaky, too: his striving for God is kept under control by his adherence to the facts of everyday life. But it can just as well be interpreted as the oeuvre of an artist without hope who, having perceived the disintegration of the one and only Truth, tries to defend the truth of the One, fighting for the independence of the individual and kindling an odd epistemology just when he is most without faith, all the while never ceasing to praise the wonders and wealth of existence and Creation.

His brilliant sense of form (in which also lies the secret of his vast oeuvre as a translator) is, in fact, the very severity with which he is able to force plurality into composition. His oft-cited deliberate irregularities (such as enjambments, used to counterbalance the harmony of both the lines and the sentences, emphasizing and at the same time breaking both) are nothing but carefully placed breaches in a seemingly unchangeable order.

He is very much a man of a century when every attempt turned into its opposite and each word came to mean something else the very moment it was uttered, when action was in constant conflict with morality and when solitude, the last refuge of the individual, turned into defenselessness. "A sword searches through the cave of your solitude", says his 1931 poem "Politika". At the time, he was more than easy to misunderstand: his contemporaries, injured and thus made sensitive by an inhumane century, would not forgive him for daring to contemplate all the conflicting views as equal. Though keeping politics out of his poetry, he made much-quoted, very regrettable statements, which made him seem a supporter of far-right political movements. Before his death, he did something unique in world literature: in his confessions, entitled *Vers és valóság* (Poem and Reality) he tells how each and every poem of his came to be written. With this at hand, we can admire his poetic ingenuity all the more: it shows how

the oeuvre towers above his non-poetic individuum, his life, his thinking, his blunders. Each step he takes is also a reference to his master, his model in the early years of his carreer, the leading critic and the poet laureate of his age, Mihály Babits (1883–1941), who was translating Dante's *Purgatorio* when they first met.

"It's terrible, that I do see, but it's true" goes the first line of one of his most debated poems, "Semmiért, egészen" (Everything for Nothing): a unique poetic declaration of monstrous male selfishness, and this phrase can characterize his whole attitude fairly well. He never feared any encounter with new, never yet experienced phenomena and never cared what effect his words might provoke when he was in pursuit of some new question not properly considered before.

In the twenties, in the first decade of his career, the major topic he turned to was that of social and political injustice. In addition, he admires the wonders of new-born technology, enjoys the experience of shrinking distance and the beauties of luxury and travel granted by technical civilization. In this period he published three volumes of poetry: *Kalibán!* (1923–24), *Fény, fény, fény* (Light, Light, Light, 1924–25) and *A sátán műremekei* (Satan's Masterpieces, 1926). He recognized the incredible power of wealth. The second of these volumes, *Fény, fény, fény,* is full of ecstasy at the wonders of nature and technology and at the will of mankind at its most creative, with some proud frowning at the sight of human wonders such as the port in Genoa. The third volume envisions the filthy and unfair world of wealth, much as in the works of Kafka, Maaserel, Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* and Brecht's *Threepenny Opera,* ironically describing the working mechanisms of capitalism. He contemplates the power of money and the mechanisms of consumption with awe and envy, while despising their working and hating the "robbers' accomplices". At this point, he is rather close to Marxist political economy as he tries to grasp the logic behind exploitation, but his attention turns the other way and he concludes that money is an irrational instance of power with laws of its own, exploitation is eternal, and it is a question of blind fate which man is born for poverty, and which for wealth. History is a stage of constant and unchangeable exploitation, and all technological achievements can do is turn the respect of the poor into hatred.

In the first decades of his poetry, Szabó is strongly influenced by German expressionism, his poetry is much like that of Kurt Pinthus' anthology published in 1920, *Menschheitsdämmerung. Symphonie jüngster Dichtung* (Dusk of Humanity. Symphony of the Youngest Poetry). In these years, from his first volume, *Föld, Erdő, Isten* (Soil, Forest, God, 1922) to *A Sátán műremekei* he follows the arc of German poetry from the classicist modernity of Stefan George to the expressionists, adapting the latter's style to the needs of Hungarian poetry. He is eclectic not only in the choice of subject, but also in form. He writes in free as well as blank verse, in stanzas that might or might not be read as traditional poems, or imitating the chorus of ancient Greek drama. All these forms, how-

ever, represent a single, incessant struggle: that between avantgardism and classicist regularity. His later poems, those in his dramatic volume *Te és a világ* (You and the World, 1932) and the much more lyrical *Tücsökzene* (Cricket Music, 1947), and some of the great poems afterwards, such as the philosophic contemplations of "A földvári mólón" (On The Jetty at Földvár), formulate the experience of the man of his century with great intensity and individuality, creating, as it were, a classicism all his own. Yet as early as the twenties, he could create, in his numerous poems, from subjects then fashionable all over Europe, something completely unique and personal.

There is a strange stylistic dialogue to be heard in the poems of the first decade, which can be seen as the eclecticism of a beginner—but something more as well. This seems to be the reason for his decision to rewrite and republish all his early works in 1943, at the height of his career, just before the world crashed around him. He needed the improved versions of these poems to serve as precedents for his mature poetry.

He had led a decade-long fight against messianistic traditions. Not in the thematic sense, but poetically. The poems of *Te és a világ* are built on the result of this struggle—there it is not the Marxist terminology, not the social injustice, not the gesture of a tribune of the people which states the tone, but the self control which sees and questions everything at the same time, within one single sentence. The poet needed to show the way that led to this stage in his mature poetry.

At the beginning, like Pound, he used personae to represent a paradoxical world in the conflict between a traditional and an objective rhetoric—to apply a later terminology, the Führer-principle seems to fight with the Dichter-principle. The historic vision put forward in the poem "Isten" (Lord, 1923), influenced by *The Tragedy of Man,* Imre Madách's nineteenth-century philosophical drama and Rimbaud's *Le bateau ivre* is in this series, as is the technocrat's image built up from motifs from Shakespeare and Renan, Caliban or the portrait of a dictator, in the poem "Vezér" (Leader). The desperate declamation of a tribune of the nation in "Hazám, keresztény Európa!" (My Country, Christian Europe!) or "Kellenek a Gonosz fegyverei" (Wicked Weapons are Needed) asks if the traditional views of the 19th century and the Christian words of two thousand years still hold true in the 20th. The question is whether you can still convey traditional meaning by uttering traditional words. He counters the rhetoric of tradition—with what? This is what he seems to be at a loss about in this decade. He is not yet aware that he will be one of the chosen few (alongside the mature Yeats, Eliot and Pound) in the rethinking of 20th century poetic rhetoric and in the creating of the poetic practice to convey it.

In this period he asks the questions springing from the conflict of the individual helplessly facing history. He denies love and calls it a luxury. Action springs from force ruled by a new leader possessing the "Complete Truth". The humanistic artist feared the rule of inhumanity, but the rebel hails it and admits

that "wicked weapons are needed." All this written around 1926 or in 1928, when the idea of the poem "Vezér" was conceived, is more than an echo of a poet from a nation that lost the First World War, Stefan George's prophecy. The "captains of the world" as they are referred to in the poem, are figures of history now, after Lenin's coup d'état, Miklós Horthy's 1920 march into Budapest, Mussolini's *Marcia su Roma,* the coups by Pilsudsky in Poland, Mannerheim in Finland, Valdemaras in Lithuania, Petljura in the Ukraine, Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, the dictatorships of Carmona in Portugal and Primo de Rivera in Spain, the battle between Stalin and Trotsky are all phenomena to be studied.

Eliot writes very similar monologues (like "Triumphant March" and "Difficulties of a Statesman" in "Coriolan"), while Brecht contemplates the questions of messianism and power in *The Good Woman of Sechuan.*

The first thing to do is to form the committees:

"I am destiny, the single and only way. / The test comes next", says Szabó's Leader (in prose translation). "The fight! All I have / done so far was only preparation. [...] All ready. I am present / in seventy cities of the country, / am pointing towards the capital in fivehundred thousand / bayonets, in an hour from now / the sign goes off on my screen: / I'll cease to be and the current of my heart / will start the new order's machines."

Eliot's new leader has these ideas:

*The consultative councils, the standing committees, select committees and sub-committees.*

*One secretary will do for several committees.*

(T.S. Eliot: "Difficulties of a Statesman")

But how can one counter this history—let's call it Caliban's Syndrome—not with political means but by ridding poetry of messianistic ideas? One answer is to be found in Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley". Pound, alongside with Eliot, turns away from verse libre in the last third of the 1910s and returns to the strictest stylistics and construction, with the novelty of coding the relativity of judgement into the text. This makes the return a poetic novelty as well: the end of the equation between sentence and judgement, the creation of an interpretational "atonality" within the sentence. One single line of Pound's: "Caliban casts out Ariel" (final version 1920), has come to be associated with various poetic events embodying the trends in poetry in the twentieth century.

This one line states very clearly the change that had occured in the history of cultural symbols. In Europe as well as in America, the figure of godlike Prospero had been overshadowed by the conflict between Ariel and Caliban, with more and more emphasis on Caliban even in amateur, college stagings of the play. Pound's infamous line had been preceded by Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos" written in 1860 but published only in 1864, and Renan's philosophic dramas

(*Caliban, suite de La Tempête,* 1878, *L'Eau de Jouvence, suite de Caliban,* 1880), while Caliban's voice is echoed in Joyce's *Exiles* (1918). There it is Rowen, Joyce's "self-portrait" who quotes Act III of *The Tempest,* "The isle is full of voices", where it is also an allusion to Ireland. As we reach the 20th century, Caliban's name comes to mean all those who are downtrodden and rebellious, even though as a figure he still bears all the disgusting characteristics bestowed upon it by Shakespeare.

The same phenomenon appears in Hungarian poetry in the works of two poets, formerly master and student, responding to each other in monologues. Mihály Babits translates *The Tempest* in 1916 as an anti-war protest, placing peace-making and moderating Prospero in the centre of his interpretation. This interpretation, preferring Ariel and Prospero, induces a kind of humanistic, pathetic aura around the play, supported by Babits's unquestionable authority. Lőrinc Szabó's "Kalibán" (1923) is a generational rebellion against his master, bearing the marks of both the personal and the political character of a talented poet.

Master and pupil here mutually misunderstand one another. Recognizing the shifting and reshuffling of cultural values around him, Babits is busy trying to fix an interpretation he thinks traditional, while Szabó puts the emphasis on the inevitability of change. The point for Babits is that classicist-minded modernism, so much like his own, is not resistant to political influence. This was well illustrated by Stefan George's war poems, showing how such modernism can accommodate a preference for antihumanistic, messianistic values.

According to the memoirs of his contemporaries and his own various newspaper pieces, Szabó might well have been enthusiastic about racist ideology and Hitler, just like Pound was a supporter of Mussolini—in their poetry, however, they turned away from all the utilitarian or messianistic solutions. The most characteristic summary in Szabó's oeuvre of this strict separation from ideologically contaminated poetic diction is the poem "Szun Vu Kung lázadása" (The Revolt of Sun Vu Kung, 1935).

Sun Vu Kung is a user of technology, an uncontrollable figure who wants to have everything life can offer and who is envious about everybody else's possessions—he is the prototypical rebel striving for power without reserve. On the other hand, there is Buddha, his complete opposite: peace, love and order, everything that defines the position of human beings within a system, thus defending everyone's rights within these limits. As the story goes, Buddha ultimately "casts out" Sun Vu Kung, just as in Pound.

He is the hero of *Fény, fény, fény* as well, defined by the rapidity of technological development and whose failure foreshadows the pain of a finite existence. Sun Vu Kung shares the internal struggle of Yeats's Irish airman (which Szabó translated into Hungarian): "A lonely impulse of delight / Drove to tumults in the clouds"; he is disappointed to find the "waste" at the end of the world, in his

internal "tumult". His purposed activity is more than mere destruction—it is akin to the Apollo in Rilke's conclusion in "Archaic Apollo" (which Szabó also translated): "you must change your life." Buddha is also beyond a humanist image of goodness: the ruthless deliberation with which he finally puts the mountain on top of Sun Vu Kung "out of mercy", is the ever-existent limitation imposed by the guardians of social order.

The poem implies that there is no pure human formula: historic figures, just as ordinary people, are a combination of extreme characteristics. At the peak of his career, Szabó performs a special tightrope act: he tries to make up a harmonic whole out of his radically different poetic selves, his everyday self and the man of his age. He is well aware that history and human nature will upset this balance and impel it towards one of the extremes: for this reason the struggle will never cease, the victor will always humiliate the vanquished, which, in turn, breeds further rebellion and desire. This is an accurate description of the Europe of the 1930s and of his own personal life as well. Still he tries to incorporate the ideal moment of balance in his poetry, as a summary of all the diverging forces.

His 1932 volume, *Te és a világ* (You and the World) was hailed by contemporary critics as one of the peak points of his poetry. Together with his *Válogatott versei* (Selected Poems) published in 1934, it was meant to be a summary and reevaluation of his work up to that point. After a year of silence, there was a need to scan what he had done before he starts to write new kinds of poems.

A contemporary of, and in many respects with similar aims as Attila József, Szabó sets the poetic objective of surveying our place in the universe, the potential for self-fulfilment in a moment in history when the world of the middle-class seemed to run out of possible roles to play, at a time when masses of identical people with no individuality were needed, who will do anything they are told to. The Dichter can only register the appearance of a formidable *Führer*. Szabó, having realized this lack of possible roles in his poetry, will try and fight to keep up the possibility of individuality, will try to rescue the Dichter from the *Führer*'s grip.

He would not accept any messianistic hope. His poetry contains two attitudes, that of the self-fulfilling rebel—and that of the sceptical onlooker watching the failure of the former. Personality is located precisely in the dialogue of these two opposite poles, which are not mutually exclusive—they merely represent two parallel fields. One is of an active nature having its own desires, assuming roles and revolting against the pressures of the world, while the other is a contemplative one that accepts the seemingly eternal laws of the world and resigns itself to what can not be changed. Probably the most convincing declaration of this type of thinking is "Az Egy álmai", (The Dreams of the One), which is very much akin to "Eszmélet" (Consciousness), a 1934 poem by Attila József.

In the volume *Te és a világ,* Szabó abandons subjects typical of the rebellious poet: he ceases to argue about social and personal facts. He builds up a vision of a system of intricate webs surrounding and controlling the individual as a social and biological being ever struggling for freedom.

"Semmiért egészen" (Everything for Nothing) is probably the best-known of his poems. At the end of his life he himself said "I think this is my best known poem". It was written in a café, and was first published in a daily paper on 24 May 1931. Even though it is admired by all those who enjoy poetry, it has been much debated due to its seemingly male chauvinist statements.

Szabó was married for 36 years, from the age of 21 until his death. At the same time, he was in love for 25 years with his wife's friend, until her suicide. Apart from these ties, his poetry and his confessions make reference to several other affairs. He himself recalls how he wrote this particular poem in *Vers és valóság,* saying, "It was provoked by ten years of marriage and fourteen or fifteen years of love experience. And also the position I was in regarding Erzsike [his love]. I have thought for decades that this poem was meant for Nagyklára [his wife] alone, but now I am beginning to realize in a way it has a message for Erzsike, too. It seems I wanted fidelity from both of them. The whole question of fidelity-infidelity-love must have been but a pile of foggy ideas and I knew I wanted too much by demanding such complete selfless devotion."

Years later he put that another way in an interview. "Yes, I am selfish. As far as I know, other men are not. Neither are women. Therefore what I want is something absolutely special. I want joy and complete reliability. Consolation, a helpful companion. Especially in the case of long-term contracts, such as marriage. The wife, unless she is a very special, ingenious, independent and creative personality, should be but a part of her husband's life. This ought to be her pleasure, her ambition, her happiness. This only will grant domestic peace. Equality in rights and rank is mostly nothing but theory, superstition. Practically, the internal rights of two spouses or lovers are formed by the personal contract between these two people, never even put in words. There are walks of life where a woman has many more rights than a man, whereas in others she has practically none. In order to get the best overall performance, it is most advisable that of the two the better one—in the widest possible sense of the word— should be the decision-maker. The one who is greater, the stronger one. If such is the case the other should not waste his or her actual lesser strength on competing or hindering the leader but should provide unconditional support. In everything. Can't this be a beautiful, noble ambition for a woman? Of course it can! I respect my wife very much because she likes my poem 'Everything for Nothing' which, for some readers, reveals the 'real' attitude of men."

I personally tend to find just the opposite message in the poem than the one coded into its reading tradition by its author and readers alike. As the poet

states himself, it starts very "high", and this momentuous beginning does not yet point to the subject. "It's terrible, that I do see, / but it's true", the poem warns the author and the reader straight away, anticipating a shock. Attila József starts his poem "Téli éjszaka" (Winter Night) with "Discipline, discipline!" (Transl. Zsuzsanna Ozsváth and Frederick Turner) and, earlier, Rilke, stunned by the perfection beyond accidence of Apollo's torso had exclaimed, "You must change your life".

What can a human relationship be like under such circumstances? Can there be a relationship like that at all? If you will, the poem is a ruthless cry for help from an individual suffering from loneliness, an absurd idyll of hell.

Recalling the poem towards the end of his life, Szabó meditates on all these questions and calls it "foggy", with the question left unanswered at the end. "I didn't know what I could promise in exchange for fidelity. But I trusted myself and my willpower and that I would be able to find something valuable enough to give."

But still the poem expresses such a powerful male chauvinism that Szabó himself prepared all his life afterwards to write a counter-poem, to make some kind of amends. He didn't realize that what he had written was a text that takes the trouble to consider "tempering this Hell", in the words of his friend and fellow-poet, Gyula Illyés—a Yeatsian "tragic joy" as opposed to the humiliated and oppressed. If not with the hope of changing anything, then at least with the chance to share one's sufferings. It may have been this urge to make amends that brings about *A huszonhatodik év* (The Twenty-sixth Year. A Lyrical Requiem in 120 Sonnets), a great dirge for his love, who had committed suicide in that year of their relationship.

For a whole year then Szabó was lost for the present and the past is revived. It is in this past become present that the two people experience the years of pleasure again, one of them heading for suicide, the other already shown as the mourner-to-be. The poet is building up the mystery of "imagined imagination", while they are both present but he is also well aware of his loving companion's absence. The two, presence and absence, are presented as a continuous process, in imagined synchronicity. In the moments of discovering the great theme, the pain of "you are not with us any more" is filtered through the consolation of "you have been". Memories are recalled exactly, ruthlessly, but past scenes and situations appear now in a new light, security, confidence, permanence pervade the couple's relationship: "eternal presence, though pure imagination only".

Dorothea von Törne made a remarkable observation on reading the German translation of the cycle. She says that *Huszonhatodik év* is "one of the most intimate and most open pieces of poetry. ...It is open in the sense that—most uniquely for love poetry—it involves the reader. That is, the reader witnesses awe-inspiring efforts, those of Orpheus to bring back his love into our world. ... In these sonnets the lovers are very much dependent on the laws of the universe as well as on those of society still ruled by bourgeois morality. Christian ethics

for Szabó are both compulsory and questionable. This is why we can read the cycle as a purification process which the reader is invited to join consciously."

This is what makes the figure of the dead love the subject of a kind of recollection in which the poet can experience the contradictions of his own life in the tidal waves of passion, self-accusation, hope and self-control. His love affairs were a lifestyle for him, no matter who his partners were. The only woman he would accept as a person—if only partially—was Erzsébet Korzáti. And if all he could say earlier to describe this relationship was that he "had a reliable companion in pleasure", now, afterwards, he unwraps his memories and can also see the process that built up this union, the process of "creating one another".

This is the moment when a man can recognize in the suicidal flight of his love something beyond the circle of his selfishness—universal human suffering. All this creates an occasion for the still oppressed poet and for the man who had failed in his aim to make a summary of his life in a poetic form, running for his life in his poems to escape time destroying his health. He died shortly after the cycle was published in 1957.

Lőrinc Szabó poses the great questions of life in his cycles. Indeed, in this sense, his volumes can also be considered cycles. He made a vow when he turned the cycle form into a means of orientation, and built up his meditations from the bits and pieces of his biography. What Yeats in his late period separated into short poetic summaries and prose recollections, Szabó united in a major poetic work. After all, is *Tücsökzene* (Cricket Music) simply a series of poems, or is it a composition with a unified structure? Nobody should be fooled by the fact that it was written in over two years, from the summer of 1945 to the spring of 1947, during which period it was reshaped again and again; he even added yet another cycle for the second edition in 1957 (all editions since have published this version). *Tücsökzene* consists of poems of a unique structure: 18 iambic, 10-syllable lines, mostly rhyming couplets. As for its subject matter, it begins as "autobiographical recollections" in the summer of 1945, when he is told that his uncle, a protestant clergyman who had been the one spiritual mentor of his youth has died. But even before this, he had been writing his poetic memoirs in parallel with editing his collection of translations *Örök barátaink,* (Our Eternal Friends, 1941) and rewriting his earlier poems, *Összes versei* (Collected Poems, 1943). He finds this moment suitable for a summary: to sum up his way to maturity, the war and the siege of Budapest, his political humiliation. Besides, the cycle is a huge philosophical poem as a whole. It keeps surveying the meaning of life, the place of man in the universe and among his fellow men. "In a moonlit night I was once again shaken by the huge gap between the individual and the universe, between the shrill happiness of the outside world and my internal struggles", he writes on the cover of the first edition, and he repeats it in a radio interview ten years later. It is the interwovenness and separation of biography

and philosophy that makes *Tücsökzene* so unique. The continuity of the cycle is based on a parallelism: the way of the poet's consciousness from a lost harmony to a harmony hopefully to be found, and the way of life from a lost idyll to societal coexistence hopefully within reach. Discontinuity, on the other hand, is inherent in the fact that this parallelism is upset over and over again, turning biography into philosophy having little to do with the events of the life of an individual. From his Diary of 1945 it seems that he gained inspiration from biographies and *Bildungsroman* novels he read at the time, especially *Der grüne Heinrich* by Gottfried Keller. Each and every poem of the series and the cycle as a whole bears the mark of the need for education. This is what leads to the conclusion of "No. 347" (which he thought so important that he read it himself on the radio) where he speaks of an "inventory that remained a fragment", and presents a vision of the self trying to build up a universe, "it was a nice desire to say Nothing Will Suffice". Man can find a role, a field of activity, but this does not mean he has solved his life. For a poet, this means the need for constant renewal within the process of creation. He pinpoints the one moment of life that makes it into a work of art and surveys the ability of poetry to perform this transformation. The poet lives with a consciousness that floats between the facts of reality and the generalizations that can be drawn from them. By liberating the dynamism of an active mind he strives not for quietude but for the completeness of motion.

Artistic creation, recollecting one's biography are based on memory, so it involves an incessant effort to turn towards the past. Memory is the bringing back to life of something already nonexistent, turning it into an existing work of art made of a different material. This is why the question arises, "possibly matter is no other thing than memory as well?" ("No. 313"). The poet's conciousness turns to the past, to the very creation of art, to the problems to be solved. The process of creation is the sum total of two parallel surveys in the past: retracing the bio-graphy and a constant checking to see if the questions asked during the recollected period are still valid. The poet did not write the pieces of the series in the order they appear now—he wrote bits and pieces of it all jumbled up, but always keeping in mind the task he set for himself by deciding on a particular time perception.

The product is built within this framework in the poet's mind, in which it is possible to constitute at the same time the present of time-shaping memory and of the mind controlling and determining the process of creation and the progress of the text being as it is born, by definition, in linear time.

"Strange, / but it seems true that the Universe is the range / of a Poet's Brain.", says one of the last poems of *Tücsökzene*. This reminds us of passages by Goethe, whom Szabó admits to reading frequently at the time. One of them is about Goethe saying to Eckermann, "I know it is difficult, but the life of art is to perceive and represent strangeness. And also: as long as we remain within the

limits of the general, anybody can imitate us, while nobody can imitate us doing something particular. Why? Because the others have never experienced it. It is needless to worry and say that the particular will not be understood by the public. Each and every character, however particular, and each and every object, from a stone up all the way to humans, has a general aspect, because everything in the world is repeated, there's nothing that exists only once."

A simultaneous perception of the finite and the infinite, the acceptance of the limits, the human mind deep-rooted in existence, all these are together in the closing lines of this majestic poem, stressed by the use of cross-rhymes. This peak of poetic creation and human existence, with all its secrets and self-limitations, gives the only possibility of safety in an uncertain life. This is the safety that makes it possible to conclude the process of creation, it makes it possible to construct the poem, and this means the balance of life in the perspective of death. This is a Faustian moment, the safety of a certainty never quite reached, the unity of the finite human with the infinite universe in human consciousness, in the case of the poet, in a poem.

*... and, stopping suddenly,*
*your earthly consciousness will be unbound*
*but safe, the big blue meadow's heavenly*
*star-set cricket music stir and resound.*

This transcendental idyll concludes the first version of *Tücsökzene* in 1947. It is the summary of all the experience a man has gathered by his mid-life and a contemplation of all the facts of his existence: with its wealth and with its finiteness. ❧

Lőrinc Szabó

# Poems

## *Caliban*

Kalibán

*Caliban:... burn his books.*
Shakespeare

*Only burn the books, Caliban, Caliban!*
*Destroy the lot of them! Let your hairy hands*
*choke the life out of meaningless elfin games*
*of gem-bright minds, reduce them all to soot!*
*No need of them. What has god-given knowledge*
*to swagger about? It's business too! The scum*
*of the earth feels shame and so puts on a mask*
*expressive of the mind's paralysis.*
*Eternal verities, you've bragged enough,*
*and reverie, three ways corrupt, who, up to now,*
*grovelled for us everywhere, just cut it out!*
*And you too love and the law, all that you are!*
*Empty beliefs. And beauty, you trickery,*
*and you too soul, what more can you be than*
*a measly cobweb? and you words, you, words, you*
*hypocritical gods: perish the lot of you,*
*every last one of you, so from now on*
*we don't feel or believe, and never again*
*shall expectations have a chance to haunt us.*
*Only burn the books, Caliban, Caliban!*
*Wipe from our faces imitations of*
*angelic features and let power at last,*
*who is lord anyway, be our sole lord!*
*Only burn the books, Caliban, Caliban,*

*hammer us into iron, harden us, make us*
*cyclopean steel-filled structures! Caliban,*
*you different philosopher, in you*
*your engineer contrived a prodigy;*
*that rusty operative, your monstrous brain,*
*rattles the fundamental formula,*
*the truest of the beastly universe,—*
*Caliban, Caliban, terrible magical force,*
*only you are able to help us now:*
*transform us into giants, black and awesome,*
*with headlights instead of eyes, machines that eat*
*coal, so that when you burn the worm-riddled books*
*we with our towering bodies and rattling ankles,*
*projecting our shadows on the oscillating*
*sky of destruction, shall dance in unison,*
*prance devilish before your bonfire, with no*
*capacity to feel regret that we*
*have no chance to be human ever again.*

*(1923)*

*Translated by Alan Dixon*

# *I Love You*

*Szeretlek*

*I love you, I love you, I reach for you*
*All day I look for you, seek for you*
*All day when you're gone I'm in tears for you*
*Repining, sad lover, for love of you*
*I kiss you, the sweet and the sour of you*
*I kiss every minute and hour of you.*
*I kiss every minute and hour of you*
*my lips are still faint with the taste of you*
*I kiss the ground rich with the weight of you*
*I kiss the minutes you wait and I wait for you*
*I from afar, I seek for you*
*I love you, I love you, I reach for you.*

*(1928)*

*Translated by George Szirtes*

# *Everything for Nothing*

*Semmiért egészen*

*It's terrible, that I do see,*
*but it's true.*
*If you love me, your life should be*
*not unlike suicide for you.*
*What do I care, what the modern sect*
*or well-intentioned laws expect;*
*one must be master, one the slave;*
*he rules within*
*who serves without, whose pleasures crave*
*only their own law and origin.*

*You're not mine as long as you're your own:*
*your love's not real.*
*Want me for yourself, you weigh me down:*
*a holy bargain's still a deal.*
*Here's what I want: for you, nothing,*
*and in exchange, for me, everything.*
*All else is but two egoists*
*in secret strife.*
*I ask more: all that in you exists*
*must be mere components of my life.*

*Everyone scares me, I'm sick and tired*
*of the whole show.*
*Still, maybe, I have desired*
*you, but all faith left long ago.*
*As for these vile fears, what can I say—*
*there's just one way to make them go away:*
*in total sacrifice for me*
*and abjectness,*
*denying all the world, to be*
*devoted to my happiness.*

*Take but one moment for your own,*
*dare think, beget*
*one solitary thought alone,*
*feel for yourself, your life, regret;*
*be more than just an object, just*
*as dead and will-less: like the rest,*

*from that one moment you will be*
*no more, nor less,*
*than one more stranger is to me,*
*indifferent and pleasureless.*

*The law protects our neighbour; so*
*that's fine with me.*
*You, if you'd have me love you though,*
*a beast, beneath the law, must be*
*just like a lamp I turn off, so,*
*don't live unless I want you to,*
*don't speak, don't cry; the doorless jail*
*don't even see;*
*and on myself I will prevail*
*that you forgive my tyranny.*

*(1931)*

*Translated by Zsuzsanna Ozsváth*
*and Frederick Turner*

# *Dream of the One*

*Az Egy álmai*

*You being you and he being he,*
*his interest, not yours, he serves,*
*thruth just a set of formulae,*
*or some state of the nerves,*
*and since the outside world won't please,*
*and since the masses grant no victories,*
*and I'd not say upon the world's decrees,*
*it's time for me*
*to liberate myself from all of you,*
*to loose the bonds, go free.*

*What I am waiting for so humbly here,*
*to glimpse what future times will do?*
*time's running, and all life is dear,*
*all that's alive is true.*
*Either I'm sick, or you are, only one,*
*and you tell me I shouldn't watch that gun,*

*whether it's love or hate that makes you run,*
*and I'm the prey?*
*If I'm the understanding one,*
*where does that leave me, pray?*

*No, no! no, I won't be just a thread*
*in someone else's tangled skein,*
*giving the guards respect and sympathy,*
*feeling my jailer's pain!*
*He who could stand it long since got away,*
*yes, though he walks through blade-traps every day.*
*The world and I, the two of us, must stay*
*stuck in this cage;*
*as self-concerned as is the world itself. I stand*
*right at the centre of my stage.*

*See, my soul, the lock is almost forced,*
*we're getting out; intelligence*
*paints on itself the simulated bars*
*of its offence.*
*What is a thousand outside, is but one within!*
*Who's ever seen that fish's scale or fin*
*that no net, mesh untorn, could yet contain*
*nor filter out?*
*Is this forbidden? Some forbid it. Sin?*
*Oh certainly, if it gets out.*

*Within us are no borders or details,*
*nothing's forbidden,*
*it's just us—mind and soul, not good, not bad,*
*alone, hidden.*
*Hide deeper in yourself! There it will be,*
*that wanton reckless dawning, huge and free,*
*the dream that flows so endlessly*
*as in the acid salt*
*of tears and blood we taste the memory*
*of our mother, who's the vast sea.*

*In to the ocean, back, forever!*
*Only then can we be free!*
*From the Many, from what's outside, we'll never*
*get what we need, to be.*
*Bargain with the masses if we must;*

*truth like ashes turns to dust;*
*our homeland is a One that will not trust*
*itself to be shared out;*
*dream then, if we can, of that true Oneness:*
*dream it beyond doubt.*

*(1931)*

*(Translated by Zsuzsanna Ozsváth and Frederick Turner)*

# *Separate Peace*

*Különbéke*

*If, some time ago, all I know now*
*had reached my brain,*
*if I had gathered life can be so*
*dragged down with pain,*

*I wouldn't be whistling in the street*
*so damned sprightly:*
*I would have discovered a way to*
*hang more likely.*

*Early, when many prodigal sons*
*of dreams were moved,*
*I too foolishly believed the world*
*could be improved,*

*believed that persuasion could be used,*
*and force at times,*
*so that, if people wanted, they could*
*lead better lives.*

*All is so much more terrible than*
*I thought when young,*
*but I thank God I can feel disgust*
*diminishing;*

*I find the horror of the years much*
*less affect me,*
*time and indifference already*
*disinfect me.*

*One thing, then another, casts its veil*
*and looks the same,*
*so that my thirty-three years can now*
*see through the game:*

*I see clearly there is more squalor*
*than showed in youth,*
*in those days it was more difficult*
*to see the truth;*

*I see how despicably the poor*
*dupe is cheated,*
*remains a dupe, so that the cheat can*
*be repeated,*

*and how that whore the mind is in self-*
*interest's shade,*
*how any rogue to sparkling hero*
*can be remade,*

*and if there are ideals they're lost, or*
*run out of breath,*
*and no other thing can bring about*
*concord but death,—*

*and because all this is not vile, even*
*sad any more,*
*and war is really everything's*
*progenitor,*

*I can look with equanimity*
*at life revealed,*
*as if at a leper colony*
*or battlefield.*

*Had I found everything out before*
*this, more quickly,*
*I'm sure I would have hanged myself—it's*
*not just likely.*

*But fate, it has always seemed, had plans*
*prepared for me,*
*it showed me everything, but slowly,*
*and patiently,*

*that's why I made a separate peace*
*with nothingness,*
*that's why I still do what has to be*
*done nonetheless,*

*that's why I value the good moment,*
*as it arrives,*
*that's why in war I'm practised enough*
*to write my lines*

*and keep whistling among the lepers,*
*and—laughing more—*
*have begun to love the children, as*
*never before.*

*(1933)*

*Translated by Alan Dixon*

# The Revolt of Sun Vu Kung

*Szun Vu Kung lázadása*

*When Sun Vu Kung, the King of all the Apes,*
*hatched from a stone egg in the days long gone*
*by strange loves of sun, moon, heaven and earth*
*on the isle of fruit and flowers, taught his stone*

*body movement and to fly like a great storm*
*over the clouds learning magic arts,*
*and secret wisdom to elevate him beyond*
*mankind; who was a creature of parts,*

*heroic leader and holy hermit both,*
*and yet, in his heart, remained the feral brute*
*who sacked the City of Death and consumed*
*the celestial peach, which precious fruit*

*had been the Gods' own food, so that he too*
*should be immortal like them, omnipotent,*
*against whose ginger head the lightning beat*
*in vain, and was almost a god, yet belligerent*

*and rebellious, demanding the Highest Throne,*
*and defeating the armies of heaven, while the Chief God*
*the Highest Ambitions and Chief Virtues, stood*
*dumbfounded and watched as he drew on,—*

*then, when he finally stood before the Throne*
*and no-one moved against him, Buddha came*
*with flowers for hands and gently motioned him*
*to lay down arms, bidding him be tame.*

*"What manner of simpleton are you?" gawps the beast*
*before whose wrath all of creation cowers.*
*And Buddha answered, "Peace and goodness am I,*
*and hither have I come to curb your powers."*

*"Most wonderful!" bowed Sun Vu Kung. But Buddha*
*bade him beware. "You do not know what I know!"*
*"Nor you what I do!" the monster answered back*
*and beating his breast related, blow by blow,*

*how he stirred the Milky Way with his harpoon,*
*and boasted that in battle he'd set to flight*
*both earth and heaven, spirits of beasts and trees,*
*and torn Death's Black Book to shreds so that he might*

*be immortal, and how he'd gained possession*
*of the secret knowledge. His bragging knew no bound:*
*"A single somersault from me, I cover*
*eighteen hundred miles of open ground.*

*I can affect seventy-two distinct*
*transformations and assume the shape*
*of a million giants. I am the sum of all*
*perfections," bellowed the great ape*

*at the Lord of Heaven. "Nobody rules me:*
*I am Perfection and I want the Throne!"*
*And Buddha answered, "Then, if you triumph*
*in one more task, it will be yours alone,*

*providing you break my power. Now show me*
*if you can escape by getting past me. See,*
*here is my palm. If you can somersault*
*clear out of it you win, if not you yield to me."*

*The challenge appealed to Sun Vu Kung. He thought,*
*"The Buddha is mad. I know him, and his hand's*
*no bigger than his lotus leaf. It should*
*be child's play overcoming him." He grinned*

*in anticipation of his triumph. "Fine,*
*then let us see if you or I succeed."*
*So saying he rose into the air, and settled*
*on the Buddha's palm. "We'll see indeed.*

*Ready?" "I'm ready" "Then go!" He took*
*one vast leap and disappeared from sight,*
*thundering as he went, like the devil's wheel,*
*so he turned his somersault in flight,*

*and flew and surged like any hurricane.*
*ever faster, faster than light he flew,*
*flew and tumbled, past immemorial aeons,*
*past clouds of stars, a thousand seas of dew,*

*flew on beyond space, drunk on his speed*
*like a thought that stops time dead, flew on*
*to cap his triumph with the Infinite*
*which would be added to his infinite guerdon,*

*flew on, already he had ventured beyond*
*the limits of the Last Universe when suddenly*
*he saw five enormous pillars billowing*
*scarlet against the sky at the end of all eternity.*

*Just one more somersault and he was there*
*and landed where never yet had strayed,*
*and lay down to peer cheerfully into*
*the depths of the incomprehensible void.*

*Then rose again. "Time to return," he said,*
*"and become the Lord of Every Place, All Powers,*
*but just to show I have been here I'll write*
*my name on one of these great look-out towers,"*

*and so he did, upon the central pillar:*
*"King Sun Vu Kung was here," he gaily wrote*
*and because he suddenly felt the urge*
*marked other pillars with something of equal note,*

*then started home. Like lightning darts he flew,*
*flying through space, like light without a sound,*
*he flew and span, past immemorial aeons,*
*past seas of stars without shore or ground*

*like timeless thought he winged his passage back*
*across the fields of vast infinity*
*and so arrived, and cockily leapt down*
*from Buddha's palm, and screamed, "Now yield to me,*

*the Throne is mine! To the ends of the world have I*
*travelled and left my mark there as it was my whim*
*to do!" Buddha gazed at him a while with pity*
*then slowly raised his hand and answered him:*

*"You miserable ape, barbaric in*
*both thought and power, if you believed*
*you could defeat me while your unchecked power*
*was fuelled by greed and war, you were deceived.*

*And did you really think you could escape*
*my hand? Here is my middle finger. Look*
*what it says on it: "...Sun Vu Kung was here..."*
*did you not write that? And this filth in the crook*

*of my thumb is also yours." So Sun Vu Kung,*
*the Perfectest of Beasts, before whose might*
*the Highest Throne had trembled, saw that Patience*
*and Goodness were stronger and himself took fright*

*and tried to flee. But not so fast, for Buddha*
*in his forebearance, planted a mountain on him*
*saying, "Meditate here a thousand years,*
*until you change your heart, heaven receives you in."*

*(1935)*

*Translated by George Szirtes*

# *Willow by the Lake*

*Fűz a tóparton*

*Under a vast sky it meditates, as if*
*wanting to haul in its own shadow,*
*bending and staring into the lake*
*not understanding what haunted echo*
*of itself peeks from that other reach of blue,*
*hanging upside down in deeps far below,*
*as if from a drowning world overhead*
*it desired to haul in its own shadow.*

*(1939)*

*Translated by George Szirtes*

# *By the Fireplace*

*Kandalló előtt*

*I love to see hearth's embers, peaceful gold*
*of the burnt wood, the crimson bonfire filled*
*with jagged crystalline light, the veins of flame,*
*the coruscations crossing the untamed*
*landscapes, the ignited hieroglyphs playing*
*for the expectant soul. What are they saying?*
*What do they mean? What secrets are at risk?*
*I open a fender: heat sticks like a mask*
*and the light is blinding; coal twangs, recovers;*
*perhaps the strings of long-departed summers*
*are struck by the consumed substances. Each*
*moment is a pleasure beyond the reach*
*of craving, each has goblin-music, glitter.*
*The golden hoarfrost simulates a shiver*
*here and there; cooling and shrinking ashes*
*tangle and nip the bonfire with their laces,*
*though it blazes strongly still, like the setting sun,*
*whispering what? That differs for everyone.*

*(1947)*

*Translated by Alan Dixon*

# From *Cricket Music*

## *Farewell*

*Búcsú*

*What happened? Don't weep for me my love! I felt*
*that I had moulted. The fibres of my fate*
*broke. A hundred rooms, a hundred seasons*
*shape me suddenly, constructions, demolitions;*
*(as one could once). Though a turtle dove is cooing*
*over me for the fourth day, wars have been showing*
*a rage so terrible none of you could guess.*
*I hardly can; each minute every sense*
*is multiplied. Your raw grief looks through me*
*and in that look it asks where I can be.*
*Torn limb from limb, I'm in three billion*
*scatterings! And what? That's not yet shown*
*to me. Love or electric power? Gold-glass-*
*atom perhaps, or heatray nucleus.*
*Light inhabiting space on Saturn. Strange,*
*but it seems true that the Universe is the range*
*of a Poet's Brain.—You leaving? The approach*
*of evening proves I once loved you so very much,*

## *At the Lookout*

*...kilátón...*

*Once more I take you over Lake Balaton*
*and up the lookout. The kiss of the wind is on*
*your face: that's me! A big round moon is drifting*
*over jagged Badacsony, its bridging*
*reflections stretching almost as far as this.*
*The sacred night is chirping. Can you hear it?*
*The soul is opened out: so it observes*
*itself, but over it space pleats its nerves*
*and between the infinitely high and low*
*crickets are striking up fortissimo:*
*the U's are thrumming and the E's are gleaming,*
*oo-roo-kroo, kri-kri: full everywhere, and teeming*
*so echoingly, circling like the waves*
*which take an island in their foam's embrace:*

*more fully even, as last year, the year before*
*and as it will be always: weave it in your*
*substance, and into its texture weave yourself;*
*you will become a sigh and find relief,*

## *...The Big Blue Meadow...*

*...a nagy kék réten...*

*is what you are, a rustling, all at once*
*the earth, the sky, fire-magic, a sleeper's dance;*
*you shut your eyes, wind kisses you afresh,*
*and inside and outside dizzily intermesh,*
*and singing rings and the meadow swings and hums*
*and as the beat of your heart borrows its pulse*
*as if across a globe the breaking light*
*exploded off you, so the Self sets out,*
*leaves you, and runs, so grows across the sky*
*and only when the whole world is inside*
*and it becomes world's tent and only then*
*will you see that vanished particle again*
*—yourself already in the all-embracing*
*limit of everything, and everything*
*your viscera... and, stopping suddenly,*
*your earthly consciousness will be unbound*
*but safe, the big blue meadow's heavenly*
*star-set cricket music stir and resound.*

*(1947)*

*Translated by Alan Dixon*

# *On the Jetty at Földvár*

*A földvári mólón*

*The lake beats on the shore: under the rinse*
*of thick glass lens the rubble swells and thins,*
*its sharply angled edges in the liquid*
*crystal fracturing, now narrow, now spread;*
*the brittle flotsam-jetsam flakes and wrecks*

*in one great chorus raise their broken backs*
*like twisted turtles while water at even pace*
*pulses and swamps each flat mossed carapace,*
*then, after a half or quarter beats delay,*
*as if in some rebellious form of play,*
*breaks the calm rhythm of its steady breath,*
*and drips off, while the open net beneath*
*floats cross-mesh patterns hither and thither*
*and sets them shimmering over one another,*
*and at the bottom, on clear sunlit sand*
*where fishes tug, their shadows are gently fanned*
*along with them and vanish in their tracks*
*in pools of colour as the light refracts,*
*and under glass lens rubble thins and swells*
*as one wave falters and another wells:*
*just fifteen seconds pass, between two peaks*
*and troughs, and once again the water leaks,*
*slips, drips and gathers, chattering away,*
*while the lightly floating net once more draws grey*
*shadows over the water floor, and so*
*repeats itself as it was bound to do,*
*in play, throughout eternity; and thus*
*frivolity outlives the lot of us,*
*outlives our enemies, this flim-flam airy*
*nothing with all the substance of a fairy*
*dream, outlives futurities of kings,*
*heroes and nations: such almost weightless things*
*are equal in their vacant gravity*
*to all the terrors of infinity!*

*(1948)*

*Translated by George Szirtes*

# *From a Crumbling Cliff*

*Omló szirtről*

*But if you have been anything at all*
*now that you are no more, because it is*
*unthinkable that in the swirl of stars*
*you should find me again at some landfall,*
*be able to give all you have given still*

*to me, my love, so much, for twenty-five years,*
*your heart I loved so much and your young soul,*
*because my living present disappears,*
*falls from my cliff (your death! the year of it*
*a crumbling cliff!), from all that must dissipate,*
*that our senses, minds, exchanged, I'm staring at*
*eternity, struck speechless by evidence*
*that all the endless stream of circumstance,*
*all that has been, has no significance.*

*(1956)*

*Translated by Alan Dixon*

Patrick Leigh Fermor

# On My 1934 Walk Through Hungary

This book is part of a trilogy describing a youthful journey. I left school rather early and under a cloud, chiefly owing to bad discipline and, *faute de mieux,* started cramming at an army tutor's in London for the examination for admission to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. But, as the months passed, doubts began to set in: a Regular Army career, in peacetime, was almost bound to lead to fresh discipline troubles; I didn't know what to do. Suddenly, inspiration scattered these gloomy thoughts.

I had a passion for the Classics, and, after all, the history and literature of Europe, its art and its religions and its languages were the things that had always fascinated me. Why not cross the Channel and plunge into the heart of it all, before wiser counsel could prevail? I had a very small allowance at my tutor's—one pound a week—so the journey would have to be on foot.* I would sleep in barns in winter, and in spring, summer and autumn, on haystacks or under trees. Constantinople seemed to be the main terminus, probably to be followed by Greece and the archipelago. I was very excited by what lay ahead and thought of myself as a spiritual descendant of the wandering scholars of the Middle Ages.

I had reached the age of eighteen and three quarters by now, and, armed with a rucksack, an ash-stick, a few books, some clothes and a diary, I boarded a small Dutch ship at the Tower of London on the evening of 9 December 1933. It was still dark when we dropped anchor at the Hook of Holland and I set off from Rotterdam in a mild snowfall as soon as it was light.

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***Patrick Leigh Fermor***

*is the author of, among many other books,* Between the Woods and the Water, *the Hungarian translation of which has just appeared in Budapest. He wrote this as its Foreword.*

* Though the pound was worth much more then, the allowance was still very small. My father was Director General of the Geological Survey of India, so I posted my plan to him the day I set off, and hoped I would be somewhere on the lower Rhine by the time it reached him in the Himalayas. He took it very well.

A wonderful winter journey had begun. Apart from French, I knew no foreign language. There was no hurry. I followed the Rhine almost to the Black Forest, then struck across Bavaria to Munich and into Austria and along the Danube. I had my nineteenth birthday at Pottenbrunn in Lower Austria and reached Vienna just as the February 1934 troubles were beginning, and crossing the Danube again at Pozsony I heard Hungarian spoken for the first time in the watery Slovakian meadows where this narrative begins.

The start and finish of my travels in Hungary proper are easy to stake out. I crossed the frontier on Easter Saturday, 1934 and looking up from the bridge from Párkány to Esztergom, I beheld a vast army of storks flying overhead in the opposite direction, bound for Poland and the Baltic. As I soon saw, they had left an enormous contingent on the chimney-pots and belfries of Hungary. All the bells of the town were soon ringing, and there were solemn processions in the streets as well as in the sky; I had left the snow and the ice behind, it was Easter next day and spring was suddenly bursting out.

At the outset I had planned to mix only with chance acquaintances and fellow-tramps, but, almost imperceptibly, by the time I reached Hungary and Transylvania, I found myself, thanks to a single letter of introduction, having a much easier time of it than I had expected or planned: ambling along now and then on borrowed horses, drifting from one country-house to another, often staying for weeks or even months under patient and long-suffering but always hospitable roofs. Many things made this part of the journey quite different from the rest. It was a season of great delight; all seemed immeasurably old, and at the same time brand new and totally unknown; and, thanks to my dawdling rate of progress and those long sojourns, lasting friendships sprang up.

I suffered occasional pricks of conscience about straying so far from my original intentions, but when I looked back, after putting these months together in writing, these twinges vanished. The next decade swept away this remote, country-dwelling world and this brings home to me how lucky I was to catch these long glimpses of it, even to share in it for a while. A subconscious wisdom might almost have been guiding me and when this stretch of the journey came to an end south of the Danube, it struck me, as I climbed through the Balkan passes, how unusual were the regions I had just traversed. They had begun to take on a glow of retrospective magic which the intervening decades have enhanced.

The precious diary covering this period was lost in Moldavia at the beginning of the war. Restored a few years ago by a miraculous stroke of good luck, it had been a great help, but not the unfailing prop it should have been. When I came to a standstill during those long halts, writing stopped too: as I was keeping a "journal of travel", I wrongly thought there was nothing to record during these gaps. I was often slow to pick it up again when I moved on, and even then, jotted notes sometimes took the place of a sustained narrative. Fearing some details might have got out of sequence when I started writing this account of them,

I surrounded these passages with a cloud of provisos and hedged bets. Then the thought that these pages were not a guidebook persuaded me that it didn't matter very much, so I let the story tell itself free of debilitating caveats.

Books about this part of the world incline to be chiefly, sometimes exclusively, devoted to politics and this abundance lessens my guilt about how small a part they play in this one, where they only appear when they impinge directly on the journey. I had to give some account of how I thought history had affected life in Transylvania—its aftermath was all about me—but my inconclusive ponderings are offered with well-founded diffidence. Nothing could be less professional or "inside Europe" than these pages and my political torpor at this early stage of life was profound.* News of grim events kept breaking in from the outside world, the June purges in Germany, the murder of Dollfuss, but something in the mood of these valleys and mountain ranges weakened their impact. There were omens, and sinister ones, but there were more years to go before these omens pointed unmistakably to the convulsions five years later.

I am deeply grateful to the friends who were kind to me on my travels. It would have been indiscreet and even dangerous to have mentioned names when the book came out. But times have changed and the reaper has been busy among my benefactors of half a century ago.

Tibor v. Thuróczy's initial letter gave me a flying start. My hosts in the Uri utca were Baron Tibor Berg and his wife Berta, whose father, Count Nákó, had been governor of Fiume. The pretty girl Harry (Kochanovsky-Pejacsevics), half Transylvanian and half Croatian, turned into a great beauty, now called Henriette Bois de Chesne. Géza Teleki, the son of the famous Count Pál, and his daughter May and his son-in-law Nándor Zichy, were welcoming and helpful. The charming Budapest art-student was Annamária Miskolczy. The August figure on p. 40 was called Princess Ella Hohenlohe; her brother, Gyuri Batthyány was a decorative and successful painter. I never met the kind Szapáry family of Albertirsa, from whose stables came Malek, my companion across the Great Plain. It was safe to mention the largely scattered Meran family at Körösladány, but not the numerous Wenckheims; I turned up like a bad penny at several of their dwellings in County Békés, ending up at the amazing O'Kígyós. In the marches of Transylvania, the third Tibor of this journey was Baron Solymosy of Apatelek-Borosjenő in Comitat Arad, and Ria Bielek. Next came the Polish Jaš Zelensky, and his wife Klára Zay of Tövisegyháza, and the Swabian family of v. Kintzig at Ötvenes. After halting with the wheat-expert M. von Konopy of Conop, staying at Szent Mária Radna, I was under the wing of Count Jenő Teleki and his Romanian wife Tinka, surrounded by books and butterflies, at Kápolnás.

*I only read Gyula Illyés's *People of the Puszta* long after my narrative had been published. I was very moved by it.

Her cousin, the *"Le Grand Veneur"* of King Carol, was called Toncsy Mocsónyi (or Mocioni), who lived a few miles away at Bulci, but their nearest neighbour was the spirited and charming Xénia Csernovics at Zám, a close kinswoman of Miklós Vajda, who is the translator of these very pages and Editor of *The Hungarian Quarterly;* and, almost next door was Angéla, who resembled her so closely that in memory they almost seem to merge... But my greatest friend in that region, further along the Maros, was Elemér v. Klobusitzky of Guraszáda, well known throughout Transylvania and in Budapest for his style, dash and humour. Retracing our triple fugue through the Szekler and Saxon regions and exploring the Bánffy palace in Kolozsvár and the old church in Segesvár in the blue car belonging to László Lázár of Lapusnic, was a great delight. Alas, I never met their friend Count Kendeffy of Hátszeg, the hero of a hundred reckless legends.

This led to the final phase of this bit of the journey, which was a steep solitary circuit through the Carpathian woods and back to the Danube again. It was several months since my arrival at Esztergom at Easter Eve and at Orsova I climbed on board an Austrian steamer on the vigil of the Feast of the Assumption, sailed downstream past the edge of Serbia and Bulgaria and, a few days later, above a cleft in the Great Balkan Range, the sky was suddenly darkened by a migration of storks, flying south, perhaps the same ones I had met earlier on, heading for their winter nests beyond the Sahara. The air was full of the beat of uncountable wings and their shadows covered the limestone slopes.

I would like to round off my list of thanks with Rudolf Fischer. My debt to him is beyond reckoning. His omniscience and his range of knowledge, and his enthusiasm tempered with astringency, were a constant delight and stimulus during the writing of this book; his vigilance has saved me from many errors, and I feel that the remaining mistakes may be precisely the ones where I failed to follow his advice. ❧

*Kardamyli, 4 October 2000*

András Veres

# György Petri

(1943–2000)

When you think about it, he was a lucky man. A born sceptic and pessimist, he could easily vindicate his disposition in history. In 1968 he abandoned for ever any youthful illusions of reforming Marxism. In the 1980s he was one of the most prominent members of the democratic opposition. The political changes of 1989 momentarily threatened with the realization of what he feared most: "One day we'll wake up having forgiven everything, / finding no hatred in our hearts to keep us alive." The performance of the first democratically elected government soon put his mind to rest: "there was no change of system, only the personnel were replaced." Yet, politics was not central to his poetry; it constituted only one (albeit crucial) point of reference. It was no coincidence that he regarded the poet Endre Ady's life as paradigmatic: he was a poet for whom his political fate became a personal problem. What really interested Petri was life's metaphysical significance; this was how the, otherwise quite banal, conflicts of love and friendship came to assume extraordinary dimensions in his poems. When he juxtaposed the Marxist creed with the idyll of banality, the latter assumed an a priori metaphysical quality as a consequence: "in our end-of-culture, pre-culture times / it would be so nice to chase you / up and down the lawns of a sunlit swimming pool."

He was also lucky in another regard: he never compromised his integrity in making the "great" decisions of life. His talents were acclaimed early on in his career. In addition to literary prizes, his poetry earned him two monographs and a collection of interviews, all published in his own lifetime. Mind you, he was often misunderstood. His first fully mature poems were published in 1969 in the

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*His fields of research are the sociology of literature and 19th- and 20th-century Hungarian literature.*

anthology *Költők egymást közt* (Poets among Themselves). His alleged "pessimism" was mentioned in it by István Vas, the poet who introduced him.

His elder peer above all else regarded *"Ismeretlen kelet-európai költő verse 1955-ből"* (An Unknown Eastern-European Lyricist's Poem from 1955) an insolence. How dare Petri claim to represent an era which he witnessed as a twelve-year-old? It was almost as if Petri tried to rob Vas of the disillusionment and responsibility that was his generation's due. He failed to notice that Petri's direct experience of the "facts of life" included the perspectives of history and philosophy of history also. Therefore, identification meant something completely different to Petri: for one thing, he was much more attached to the left, and later the liberal, intellectuals, than to his generation of poets. As to his "pessimism", this was (at least in part) an attitude he had found ready-made, which he approached with the same scepticism as he did the world of "imperial giddiness."

Some of Petri's other statements met with similar misunderstanding: once he declared that the lyrical tradition of Attila József could not be continued, thus renouncing subjectivity in line with T. S. Eliot. In fact, he abandoned neither Attila József (whose lines are frequently echoed in Petri's poems) nor subjectivity. Only the poetic self that he had created was of a meditative nature, one that considered first and foremost his reflections. In this regard, too, Petri's poetry is in a state of permanent change and renewal. In his first volume, *Magyarázatok M. számára* (Explanations for M., 1971), he attempted to re-define the intelligentsia's position in the light of 1968, and included in this redefinition was the rejection of the old/new role of the prophet. The deliberately anti-poetical, self-degrading and private tone of the poems is both a consequence and an expression of the impossibility of the traditional poetic task.

The next book, *Körülírt zuhanás* (Circumscribed Fall, 1974), shows a major shift of emphasis: in sharp contrast with his earlier works, which were dominated by lengthy (self) explanations, his later works abound in brief descriptions of his state of mind. Petri's new direction is even more pronounced in *Örökhétfő* (Eternal Monday, 1981), a book published in samizdat. Here the majority of his works are "casual" poems of direct political inspiration. The startling novelty of these poems is the provocatively base and vulgar usage—the poet wished to demonstrate the imperative need for speaking one's mind, for calling things by their names.

The best pieces in the books he published in the 1990s (*Valahol megvan*—It Exists Somewhere, 1989; *Valami ismeretlen*—Something Unknown, 1990; *Sár*—Mud, 1993) partly bring to mind the fragmented reports of the tense and dramatic events of the first volume, and partly provide ironic commentaries on the "historic situation".

By contrast, the last volume, *Amíg lehet* (While There is Time, 1999) is essentially a final reckoning in the grip of terminal illness. His late poetry has the surprising feature that it completely lacks self-pity. He wanted to clutch at the

straws of neither culture nor any other thing suspicious of transcendence. Perhaps that was the time when he really let go of Attila József's hands: "It is hard to imagine the world without me / But who said that / I had to imagine it at all?" There is something deeply personal in this ironic / self-ironic question, along with something deeply trans-personal. ❧

István Halas

*György Petri (1943–2000)*

Szabolcs Várady

# *At Petri's Grave*

*Petri sírjánál*

*A whimper, a stammer, a moan—that's grief;*
*then tears abate, it all turns into dull indifference,*
*degrades us into fools who cannot speak—*
*the rest: role-playing, or just well-meaning traditions.*
*If somebody is dead, they can't get any deader,*
*no more gradations, contrasts, nothing left to measure:*
*that's what you said, dear friend, and to you it must look that way now—*
*you don't answer our questions, you just lie in your grave now.*
*You didn't want for yourself, and forbade us from arranging,*
*the whole show: psalm, prayer and preacher's consolation.*
*What use would you have for it, you the unbeliever,*
*for whom there could only be one life, this unique, this uneven,*
*this stony, muddy, juddering, dilapidated road,*
*at the end of which a person winds up in a hole—*
*and what can be said next to this hole, what word can I say?*
*Look at me, I'm borrowing your words, my own trail away—*
*your poetry remains behind, because every line*
*we write is written against death, at least if it's worth anything.*
*You didn't surrender to the grave. When I'm not writing poems,*
*you wrote, I don't exist. But you existed. You wrote them.*
*You grammar-school boy, you Mephistophelian,*
*ever tugging on your home-rolled cigarettes, that kept unpeeling,*
*you faced this section of the sky, this time, this life, never letting*
*it all mature you into accepting what we're accustomed to accepting.*

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***Szabolcs Várady***
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*You set your heaven too high up, too rarified,*
*just like that mentor you idolized,*
*and became a bitter, sticking-in-the-throat, biting,*
*sacred monster who, even if tolerated by the world, drives himself to dying, but*
*the world, the so-called powers, tolerated you with some trouble,*
*because there was no playground wall over which you wouldn't scramble*
*(while drinking everything you could drink, leaving piles of empty cans and bottles).*
*I put that goofy rhyme there just to please you—*
*as if I didn't know any better than your devotees, who*
*proliferate, including some for whom poetry isn't their bread and butter.*
*Hey, did you know you're a hot topic on the Internet? Outsiders—*
*for that's what they clearly are—vie to nominate*
*the best bits: Look! This is what I like most!—This is my favourite.*
*Each has his own. Some like the severe judger,*
*Timon of Athens, Alceste, Tiresias for others.*
*But how trifling all this would be, how dispensable,*
*if behind the razor brain there weren't the irrepressible*
*essential curiosity, the joy of peering, probing,*
*which turns the outside world around and digests it into the poem.*
*The poem, yes, the poem. But now you are here,*
*still you aren't here. It's now being interred,*
*the thing that's you no more. And dropping on it: clods.*
*The object in the hole down there that rots,*
*that steaming stinking thing, you wrote, will not be me.*
*Remembering what I was, though, when still living,*
*let it be a pleasure, not done out of duty.*
*Indeed it isn't, Gyuri. A duty? No, this isn't.*
*Body, go on your way, eaten up and exhausted,*
*and stay with us, our friend, beloved, questing spirit.*

*Translated by David Hill*

"That mentor of yours" in the Várady poem and "Attila" in Gömöri's are both references to the poet Attila József (1905–1937).

György Gömöri

# *In memoriam Petrigyuri*

*you said so often you'd be leaving soon forever*
*i almost believed you could never be dead*
*you attila-style orphan soul squeezed shivering*
*into the work-worn body of an arab immigrant*
*constant revolutionary neither the thighs of women*
*nor immoderate vodka-drinking could make you forget*
*that existence is sad from the source*
*that organic matter just circulates indifferent*
*and that time even while we're living*
*grinds us up into collective memory's*
*specially flavoured bone meal nutriment*
*on which coming generations are already being fed*

*Translated by David Hill*

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**George Gömöri**

*is a Hungarian poet and translator who lives in Cambridge where he teaches Polish literature at the University. His latest work as a translator was a volume of poems by Petri,* Eternal Monday *(Bloodaxe), translated in collaboration with the English poet Clive Wilmes.*

Sándor Tar

# Happy Christmas

Short story

Surányi, the supervisor, came in at nine o'clock, a big, meaty-faced man with pendulous lips whom the girls called, simply, the Gorilla, or the Screw, and began shouting already in the corridor: Éva Ember! Éva Ember! What the fuck is it now, Éva yelled out through the open door, what are you raising the roof for? You're being let out today, girl, said Surányi, didn't you know? There were squeals, loud cheers in the corridor at the news, how could I have known, asked Éva, when no one ever tells us anything in here? And what do you mean let out? Am I in prison or what? No, no, of course not, said the supervisor, this is a social welfare institution after all, isn't it, a reform school for ... whores, alright, is that what you wanted to hear? You've come of age, get your gear together and let's get going! Couldn't you have told me yesterday, so I'd have the time, the girl began, but didn't go on because by then she was crying, out of joy of course on hearing the good news, and besides, girls at the youth custody centre cried easily, howling noisily, which of course always set all the others off, at such times they were like a bunch of savages singing in a choir, just a lot more painful. D'you want to stay and watch while I'm packing, asked Éva in a while, Surányi nodded, that's my job, let's go. Bugger off, said Eszti, Éva's roommate, she has to change, don't you get it? Course I get it, pussycat, said Surányi, and stayed. I have to make sure she doesn't stick something up her twat. What would she stick up there, you creep, the table or the washbasin?

And why d'you call me pussycat? Surányi grinned, pussycats are animals too, you know.

Posters on the walls, pictures of boys, pop groups. Éva was sorry to leave it all behind, but Eszti was staying on and anyway, she'd be seeing real live boys soon, not just those cut out of magazines. What am I supposed to pack into, she cried

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***Sándor Tar***

*trained as a technician and was employed in industry. He won first prize in a competition for descriptive prose in 1975 and has published several volumes of fiction since then.*

out in a little while in despair. When she was brought in aged four a carrier-bag held all her possessions, since then she'd accumulated a few things of her own, clothes, books, bits and pieces, her small brown Monkey for example, her tooth-mug, toiletries, her Walkman, odds and ends, where was she supposed to put them all? Bundle them up in your sheet, pussycat, suggested Surányi, just chuck everything in it, they'll deduct the cost from your money when you leave, everybody does it that way. And walk down the street like that, lugging a bundle on my back? You can shove it along ahead of you if you like, pussycat. Don't call me pussycat, the girl yelled, don't say anything at all, just shut the hell up, alright?

And turn your back! I have to get dressed! I'm not turning my back, said Surányi confidently, I have to watch everything, don't I? Then watch, said Éva, I hope your eyes pop out!

The corridor filled with girls, she could scarcely push her way through, they thronged around, hugging her, crying, saying goodbye, Lord, she could go where she pleased now, live her own life, have fun, they all shouted together, even the little ones were capering around her, Surányi kept brushing off their hands as if they were branches that got in his way, buzz off, go to your rooms! Her time's up, your turn'll come. By the time they reached the warden's waiting-room there were only the two of them left, the bundle lay on the floor, got to wait now, said Surányi, they're getting your papers ready, then grabbed the girl's bottom. What are you doing, asked Éva, astonished, listen, said the man, turning to face her, you're of age now, it's allowed. You're going to end up on the streets anyway, not in parliament, you'd better believe me. Don't you want me to show you what a good lover is like? Get a bit of experience.

Left alone with the man, Éva lost much of her cockiness, he might even send me back on some pretext, as a punishment, she thought as she pushed his hand off her bottom, I don't want you groping my bum, she said softly, what d'you want me to grope then, asked the man, give me a bag for all this shit for a start. That I can do, said Surányi, I can give you a suitcase. You can have it if you come back and knock on the window of the supervising room, you know which window it is. She knew. Of course she knew, countless stories, rumours had been going around in the school about that window, legends, it was said that people sometimes knocked on that window with fists, with bricks, breaking the panes, and always when Surányi was on duty. Éva was unsure of herself now, couldn't I come before I leave, she asked. No, said the man, I have to pass you out regular, but after that you can do as you choose, what you do is nobody's business. Éva sighed, then said I don't want your suitcase, or you either. As you like, said Surányi. Then, because there was still time, he told her he'd been divorced twice; in her excitement the girl could pay only scant attention to the story of a lonely man who had come to loathe so-called well-situated women, and would much rather make a fresh start in life with someone like Éva, who was in need of help, support and affection anyway.

You can move in with me for as long as you like. I love you, he said later, I've loved you for a long time, but I couldn't tell you before, you were under age.

Well, you certainly did a good job of concealing it, said the girl, she couldn't think of anything else to say, no one had ever declared love to her before, excepting Eszti, but that was different, girls in reform school alternate between love and hate all the time, that's what life is like here. What do you want from me, she asked the man nervously, you, he said, and he seemed to be speaking sincerely this time. You could be my father, said the girl, I'll be your father too if you'll let me. The secretary popped her head out of the door in the nick of time, Éva Ember, she called, which one is you?

Well, said Éva, getting up from the chair, of the two of us, I'd think it's gotta be me, don't you? The supervisor accompanied her to the gate, opened it for her, and before the girl stepped out, he gripped her hand. Then he kissed her. Her hand. Happy Christmas, he panted in her face, but the girl pulled away from his kiss.

Outside it was like as if she was caught up in a whirlwind, freedom was something quite different from what the girls in the institution dream of, buses, trams, huge crowds of people all on their way to or from somewhere, a restless, hectic throng, she couldn't face getting on the first bus, nor on the second. With this pack? A bundled-up sheet? Everyone was staring at her as it was. She thought she'd wait a while, just until she managed to collect herself, get used to being outside; she sat down on the bench at the bus stop and stared. Buses came and went, some stopped just for her, but she waved them on, and that made the drivers mouth things at her. So what. In the afternoon she ate the provisions she'd been given for the journey, two rolls with a slice of cold luncheon meat as filling, towards evening she drank the bottle of mineral water too, and just sat and waited. She didn't know herself what she was waiting for, but later she had to pee, terribly. It had got dark by then, she could squat under the bushes nearby, and sometimes when you get to pee after having to go so bad, tears gather in your eyes, but she was crying now, sobbing hard, and from somewhere close by came the sound of male laughter, so they had seen her after all, bare-assed, with her bundle lying beside her, it seems she'll never be able to hide from prying eyes ever again.

It was around midnight that she knocked on the supervisor's window, and in a little while the lamp went on and Surányi looked out of the window, then he threw open the two seasoned casements, come to the door, pussycat, he said, I'll have it open for you in a jiffy.

*Translated by Eszter Molnár*

Géza Wolf

# How the Young Live Now

In Hungarian statistical publications, the cohorts between 15 and 30 figure as Young People. According to the Statistical Yearbook for 1999, they comprise 44 per cent of the population and a third of those in gainful employment. The figures speak for themselves. It is impossible to overestimate the social and economic importance of the young.

A multitude of social and economic factors has produced a situation where there is a close correlation between large families, poverty, unemployment and low educational standards. Children are brought into the world since a contribution to the household budget is expected from them. The present administration, in any event, is ready to take up the gauntlet in the fight against a diminishing appetite for marriage and procreation. A National Family Policy, designed to popularize the traditional nuclear family model, has restored those allowances which the previous government deprived families of, such as maternity and child care allowances not subjected to a means test. Surveys by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) bear out that though the majority reject the idea of direct government intervention in the interests of boosting the birth rate, they are in favour of measures designed to encourage procreation by reducing the expenses of raising a family. Surveys regularly conducted by the KSH Demographical Research Institute since 1983 have repeatedly shown that the overwhelming majority of the population (81 per cent) is convinced of the necessity of steps which will hinder the decline in population numbers, and that such measures are primarily expected from the administration.

At the same time, the number of marriages has also diminished by 25 per cent since the early nineties. And yet, this is a child-centred society, pace high divorce and low marriage rates. Is life better with, or without, children? In a survey which covered the former socialist countries, the great majority in Eastern Germany, Russia and Poland said that the childless were better off, in Hungary, however, an overwhelming majority (80 per cent) answered that life without children was not the real thing. Marriage too received a similarly high rating. The majority of Hungarians think it more important than culture or education, leisure, self-fulfilment, a calling or

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vocation, or participation in public affairs. The survey also established that young Hungarians on the threshold of founding a family planned two or three children, and that they preferred regulated sexual partnerships. This is, however, directly contradicted by the fact that more than one child is found in only a third of Hungarian households, one third of households are childless, and another third raises one child. Two-child families account for 25 per cent, families with three or more children for 7 per cent.

Housing problems also beset the philoprogenitive. It is quite clear that in the present social and economic context the majority of young people lack the resources to secure their own home, or even to obtain a long-term tenancy. Specialists maintain that the building of a yearly minimum of forty thousand new homes is needed to maintain the present four-million-unit housing stock of the country and to give a chance to the newly wed to obtain a home of their own. What has happened instead is that the rate of housing construction has steadily declined since the early nineties. The nadir was reached in 1999, when a mere 20,000 homes were built. The present government's new housing policy aims to change this. It was made easier to obtain favourable housing loans, which became available to tens of thousands not previously entitled to them. Each married couple or single parent can obtain a home building or purchasing loan on one occasion at a rate of interest of no more than 8 per cent (as against 10 per cent in 1991 and the 23.6 per cent in 1996, the inflation rate in 1999 ran at 10 per cent), and the maximum Ft 8 million (about $26,000) credit available to private individuals was raised by two millions. Credits are no longer restricted to those purchasing their first joint homes, and various charges connected with the purchase of new homes have also been abolished. At the same time, a state supported Homes for Rent was launched, with a budget allocation of Ft 200 billion. The aim is principally to boost the local government stock of housing for rent. Local government authorities are invited to seek support for the construction, purchase or refurbishing of housing.

Teachers, psychologists and educationists who have dealt with generations of young people are agreed that the nineties produced spectacular changes in their lives and mentalities. Never before experienced opportunities became available after the end of Communism, and yet students today carry heavier burdens than any previous generation. More is expected from them and, as a result, their communal life suffers. Furthermore, many parents do not really trust schools, and insist on private tutoring for their children, particularly in preparing for university admission, thus further reducing the short enough leisure time of the young. A surfeit of exams, uniform tests and trial school leaving examinations take all the fun out of learning, and lead many young people to think that their parents care less for them than for the marks they obtain. Many—in terror that their offspring might not be admitted to the preferred institute of higher learning—truly expect that the child too should care more for performance than for health or peace of mind.

Zsuzsa Nyirő, my own former formmistress and now Deputy Head of the Berzsenyi Dániel Gimnázium, sums up her experience. "My pupils appear to have a single aim in life: to make lots of money and to live it up, that is to get a good job, a car and a home of their own, the sooner the better. Therefore they want to get into a university that provides a marketable degree." Zsuzsa Vajda, the chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Szeged, adds: "Many adolescents today

## Outstanding Products

Hungarian science in the past was hallmarked by numerous important inventions in electricity, nuclear fission, computing, telecommunications, supersonic flight, medicine, and other fields. So much so that Hungary has been called the Silicon valley of the East in American journalism, in tribute to the superb skills and training of Hungarians.

Nevertheless, in recent years, news of Hungarian innovations of that order have grown rare. Perhaps fewer outstanding talents are born these days? Surely not. According to a UNICEF survey covering twenty-seven countries, teaching standards have considerably declined in Eastern Central Europe—including Hungary—in the past ten years. According to Mihály Simai, the chairman of the Hungarian National Committee of UNICEF, equality of opportunity was swept away by the redistribution of wealth following the end of Communism. Only the upper crust can cover the increased costs without major anxieties, but 40 per cent of children at school belong to poor families. Inequalities of opportunity accumulate in the case of villagers and amongst the Roma. The training of élites has put in an appearance too, which offers more options to the well-to-do, Simai added.

One of the explanations for this qualitative deterioration is that in Hungary since 1993 proportionately less public money has been spent on education. This, according to Judit Lannert of the National Public Education Institute, is most keenly reflected in diminishing study performance. In her opinion Central Europe is gradually losing the head start it enjoys over Western Europe. As against this the Minister of Education maintains that the declining number of children in itself

follow the broker lifestyle. They are keen to get everything as quickly as possible, and they want to burn the candle at both ends. This is in fact a rational conformism given changed circumstances. Young people today have less reason to trust in a secure future than their predecessors."

According to the data, one in five believe that there is no way for the country to prosper, and that they too will vegetate in this hopeless situation. What is even more shocking is that this pessimism is not limited to those whose circumstances warrant it, to the uneducated and unskilled, but is true of young executives and intellectuals as well. It is, what is more, characteristic of the majority of optimists that their state of mind is not backed by concrete developments or expectations but by a vague hope. Waiting for a miracle to happen defines this unstructured optimism. That is why young people today aspire to qualifications that far exceed their parents'. According to a survey, carried out by the Median Public Opinion & Marketing Institute, 6 per cent of those aged between 15 and 30 hold degrees, and 32 per cent presume that they will graduate sometime. A third of the latter already attend some kind of college or university and yet only 15 per cent have at least one parent who is a graduate. A total of 53 per cent is keen on being better qualified than their parents. Of the 1,200 in the survey, half speak a foreign language (1.2 languages on average), one in two of these judges their own

does not justify less spending on education on the part of those whose duty it is to maintain schools. Zoltán Pokorni stressed that any surplus money must be spent on qualitative improvements. The aim is the regular measurement of the effictiveness of teaching in every educational institution within a year. Several hundred Hungarian schools have already introduced the Comenius Programme which is designed to serve the application of a quality guaranteeing system. Those who put it to the test are unanimous that the teaching staffs of particular institutions, which were earlier often at loggerheads, turned into cooperating teams who maintained a lively contact with pupils and their parents. The minister referred to lifelong study as the challenge of the third millennium. In other words, every social group must be capable of an ongoing renewal of its skills.

Ádám Kiss, a Deputy Undersecretary in the Ministry of Education, confirmed that an economic upswing depends on the extension of the educational system. According to him, post-Communist governments had done the right thing when they set the course of higher education in the direction of mass training. He said that within this, particular emphasis must be given to the nursing of talents (thus to postgraduate training and specialist colleges). From the year 2000, the exchequer will cover 80 per cent of the cost of maintaining educational institutions, a mere 20 per cent devolving on local governments. All expenses of schools and kindergartens in small villages will be covered by the Ministry, and so will those of students' hostels and the schools for the handicapped. The humiliatingly low incomes of teaching staff are, however, still an open question. Although the government has raised teachers' pay on several occasions, it is still well below current rates in developed countries. Significant pay rises are also needed to prevent the westward brain drain. ❧

knowledge to be "reasonable", 10 per cent "very good" and 37 per cent "minimal." An equal number (36 per cent) speak English and German, but English-speakers have a higher opinion of their own knowledge. Other languages are known by far fewer. Six per cent are able to communicate in French, and 4 per cent each in Italian or Russian. If we presume that planned language study will prove successful, then at the most three quarters of those between 15 and 30 today will speak at least one foreign language at some sort of level. Taking plans into account, the future dominance of English is unambiguous. More than one and a half times as many mentioned English rather than German as a language they intended to learn.

More than a quarter of the young had never been abroad. Those in the survey took an average of 0.8 private trips abroad in 1999. Those who had travelled in the previous year too did so 3.2 times, and those who had already travelled in 2000 before May (the time of the survey) count as real travellers. They had been abroad in 1999 on an average of 4.5 occasions. 57 per cent gave tourism and sightseeing as their purpose, one third "resting". The weight of shopping (23 per cent) and family visits (12 per cent) is relatively great. A minority had more "modern" aims: 7 per cent each pursued some active sport or attended a function, 4 per cent travelled for study purposes.

Most people presume the mobility of the young to be high, but the survey shows

that 70 per cent have continuously lived in the place of their birth, and only 24 per cent intend to move from their present locality. The ratio of those longing for a move is clearly higher out of (25 per cent) rather than in Budapest (14 per cent). Budapest is not the preferred destination, most would like to move to a country town. 14 per cent of those who contemplate a change of domicile and a mere 3–4 per cent of those covered by the survey would like to settle abroad. Many more (25 per cent) expect to spend some time abroad. Germany figures in the plans of 19 per cent of these, the U.S. comes next with 18 per cent, followed by Italy, Switzerland, France and the U.K.

It is part of the personal marketing strategy of many to spend some time abroad during their secondary school years or shortly after their school-leaving (baccalaureate) exam. "In this respect the ten years after the end of Communism opened the gates wide for our generation. There were twenty-five in our form and of them all except four spent some time abroad working or studying." László Kövér left school—the Szinyei Merse Pál Gimnázium in Budapest—five years ago. His lot perhaps succeeded so well because the twenty-five managed to pass fifty Language Proficiency Exams between them.

But more is needed than language proficiency. "Convertible" general knowledge is needed too, if you want to find a niche abroad. By way of illustrating how little 14-year-olds know, András Simor, who teaches at the Táncsics Mihály Gimnázium, reports that there are some pupils even amongst those who opt for Spanish who do not know whether Don Quixote is prose or verse. The literacy and knowledge of literature of pupils and students has taken a dive in the past decades. It would seem that secondary schools do not offer a remedy either. Mária Kopp, the Director of the Behavioural Science Institute of the Semmelweis Medical University, points out that many at the Admissions Interview are "at a loss when asked what books they have read lately or what they have most recently seen in a theatre. Secondary School pupils these days do not devour either Hungarian or world literature. The majority will be illiterate outside their chosen field," she predicts.

According to the subjects of such judgments, being unfamiliar with the humanities does not mean that they are any the less educated than their predecessors. They may not read the classics but they know how to handle a computer. The fact is that in computer skills they are streets ahead of those in their thirties. In the past two or three years household availability of computers has barely changed nor has the Internet access of adults changed, but one third of those between 15 and 30 are members of computer-owning households. Regular surveys conducted by Medián show that computers are more frequently found in households with children. Of the 3,600 households surveyed in the spring, 16 per cent have a computer, but 33 per cent of those where there is a child under 18. Every third young person between 15 and 30 has access to the information superhighway, though only 14 per cent of them describe themselves as frequent users. Educational institutions and the *Sulinet* (schools Internet) programme obviously have a considerable role in Internet use by the young. 23 per cent are given access to the worldwide web by schools. Looked at from the other side, the numbers show that only 50 per cent of pupils have Internet access.

All this is not necessarily to be welcomed. Lifestyle researchers maintain that the young just log onto the net for three hours a day on average, which—like their "duties"—is at the expense of their social

life. They get their information on-line rather than from the printed media, and it could be they chat more electronically than they chatter live. According to Krisztina Dobos, Deputy Head of the Lutheran Gimnázium in Budapest, the computer makes for loneliness. "They no longer go to the flicks or the theatre together. Friendships are rarer. If someone is away from school for a few days, the others haven't a clue what's up. No one goes to see them and even giving them a ring is rare." Ildikó Szabó, a sociologist from the National Institute of Public Education, argues that ten years ago reading was responsible for as much loneliness as the computer is today. "The young today are no lonelier, it is social contacts that are differently structured. Perhaps more children played in the street before because housing standards were lower and there was less traffic."

The young perhaps don't watch movies or go to the theatre as a crowd, but they do go somewhere, to the new shopping malls for instance, they play the one-armed bandits and they nosh in fast food outlets. The surface glitter enchants them in the magic of the moment. They can feel that it does not do them good, but they cannot resist. They adopt an Americanizing cosmopolitan lifestyle since everything around them imposes that. The characteristic difference between the cohorts is that those between 19 and 22 go out most frequently, that is those who have outgrown parental control but who have no family of their own yet. They spend most time in discos, in what are nowadays called pubs in Hungary and in eateries of various sorts. 15 to 18 year olds are more likely to attend sporting functions, as participants or spectators. The 27 to 30 year olds have quietened down. They cultivate their gardens or practise the art of cooking.

The difference between the genders reflects traditional gender roles. Women are three times as likely to be hobby cooks and twice as likely to be hobby gardeners. They more frequently go shopping in hypermarkets and it is also a female characteristic that they like to spend their spare time sitting around at home, reading a book or the papers, watching the box or listening to the radio. Men go out more often, and spend more time in the company of their friends. Home crafts, internetting and attending sporting functions are all reckoned manly pursuits. It is only natural that where urban facilities are not available, leisure opportunities are more restricted. Village folk spend more time in their home workshops, their gardens and kitchens, they watch and listen to the electronic media more that their coevals in towns, to whom amusement parlours and fast food outlets are accessible in their leisure hours.

GfK Hungaria gave a camera to all 14 to 19 year olds participating in group interviews as part of a survey, asking them to take shots of themselves, their families, their friends and their homes. They had to photograph what made them happy or, on the contrary, what made them sad or angry. These were then used to produce collages showing what the world of teenagers is in Hungary today. The material comprises several hundred pages in full colour. Obviously, what is at the centre of attention is the human body, on the one hand as the symbol of love and beauty, on the other of health and beauty care. Healthy and unhealthy food, the overweight and body-builders, athletes and smokers, cuddling couples, soaps and scents figure most frequently.

"That's what we're like, a bit mad, a little romantic, good and bad," is the conclusion drawn.

How bad? Sociologtists draw our attention to the fact that, bit by bit, a totally

washed-out society, deprived of its values, is being educated. Ten years after the end of Commmunism teachers still do not know how to teach 20th-century Hungarian history. They tend to take the easiest way out, dodging the subject. What follows is that many succeeding cohorts leave school without being contaminated by having to make up their minds about the most recent times. Their elders were at least informed by experience about the advantages of the present system over what had preceded it, but the young lack the relevant experience. A survey of secondary school pupils conducted by TÁRKI two years ago shows that what the young unambiguously expect from politicians is pragmatism. They are not the least bit interested in blather. But taking an active part in the shaping of one's future requires a sense of identity and social commitment which goes well beyond pragmatism. That is why many are afraid that these youngsters are disoriented as regards the institutional maze of democracy, and that therefore they may well be prone to accept oversimplifications. The survey showed that around 40 per cent of pupils proved receptive to wild right-wing ideas. Should they not make it to a university, or a job, that is if they remain unemployed, twiddling their thumbs for a year or two, they will obviously want to know the reason why. And it may well be that the explanation which they will accept will be out of tune with democratic politics.

## The drumbeat of workers on the march

In Stalin's words and time, work was a "matter of honour and glory". Today, getting a job is a matter of luck. Happy the young person who can be what they trained to be. The steadily diminishing rate of registered unemployed among school leavers may well be a cause for optimism, the growing number of the long-term unemployed, on the other hand, feeds pessimism. Thus employment statistics referring to the young equally justify paeans of triumph and the ringing of alarm bells.

According to the National Labour Research & Methodology Centre (OMKMK), 519,000 unemployed were registered at the end of 1994, of whom 14.1 per cent were younger than 20 and 13.6 per cent between 20 and 25. The end of 1999 saw 404,000 unemployed on record, of whom 4.9 per cent were younger than 20 and 14.7 per cent between 20 and 25. September counts as the peak for seasonal unemployment. Six years ago 75,000 school leavers were unemployed, last year, at the same time of September, only 38,0000. At the same time, data also point to the lacunae of state labour exchanges. It is true that the number of registered unemployed amongst school leavers—a category which covers those under 25, and those under 35 holding a degree or equivalent has steeply declined in recent years, but the fact that since 1996 they have not been entitled to unemployment benefits considerably reduced the inclination to register.

The government at the time, using the euphonous and rhetorical slogan "opportunities and not the dole" (in Hungarian the two terms rhyme), put an end to monetary payments for those who had never worked, and put the emphasis on a kind of labour service and on retraining. New programmes were launched expressly designed to help the young to find jobs. One was Work Experience Support for young people who left school without qualifications in any skill—many of them holders of the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (baccalaureate). Employers hiring such young people were reimbursed by the Exchequer for 50 to 100 per cent of their wages. Employment Support Pro-

## Only for the Young

Ninety-nine per cent of the long-term unemployed who are over forty have no chance of finding another job. The majority of employers will only consider younger age groups as competitive. Young labour is cheaper to start with, more flexible and more likely to be in possession of essential skills such as computer-literacy or a knowledge of foreign languages. A Brave New World has put in an appearance which has no need whatever for older job-seekers.

Two social groups, the undereducated and those with high skills in top positions are most likely to find themselves in jeopardy, should they lose their jobs. One lot is unable to make up the leeway, being underqualified—60-70 per cent of those in small villages have merely completed eight grades of primary school, 30 per cent not even that many—the others turn up their noses at most of the jobs on offer. Such was the finding of a representative survey carried out by the Munkáért (For Work) Trust. After two years without a job the health of the majority deteriorates, creating another barrier to their re-employment. Self-esteem is destroyed and a flight into illness ensues. There is ample evidence that heads of family are not forgiven for losing their jobs. Long-term unemployment frequently leads to divorce. The most serious anxiety, however, is caused by the psychological deterioration which makes social reintegration very difficult. At present three quarters of families in Hungary have at least one family member who is unemployed.

Pensioners of working age make up a significant proportion of those not in employment. Since the collapse of Communism the number of jobs has declined from 5 million to 3.5 million, that is a diminishing number of wage earners must maintain a growing number of those who are not. The latter make up 45.9 per cent, a very high figure compared to Western countries. In 1989 half a million of those of pensionable age were still working. Their number is insignificant today. The million and a half men over 60 and women over 56 who have retired from the labour market because of their age have had their numbers boosted by 661,000 invalid pensioners and such as have taken early retirement to avoid unemployment. Meanwhile two thirds of invalid pensioners are below fifty-five.

Surprisingly, more than a third of the unemployed are younger than 29. The unemployment rate of those between 15 and 22 is double the national average. The situation is even more hopeless in villages. In some regions there are no jobs for 90 per cent of school leavers, which may well lead to the destruction of the generational balance. In Vas and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties the majority of young people only do casual work, one in six is in the black economy, 40 per cent of them have already had non-registered jobs. A great many slide even further down the social scale. This is indicated by the fact that prostitution amongst the young is gaining ground, and 10-15 per cent of those under 16 have already had some sort of contact with drugs, either as consumers or as dealers. There is a danger, therefore, that the young will be further criminalized in the future. ❧

gramme for school leavers was based on a similar principle. Young people could be employed by the place where they did their practical training, while at trade school at half-public expense for 270 days, provided the employers agreed to keep them on without subsidy for a minimum further three months. The OMKMK survey is relatively optimistic. In 1998, 48 per cent of the young people so placed were made permanent, in 1999 this ratio grew to 55 per cent. But it is also true that 45 per cent were discarded at the first suitable opportunity, sometimes to be replaced by another supported young person. In the first half of 1999 not quite four thousand were in receipt of Work Experience Support and fewer than five hundred had Employment Support. The Office in Charge of the Youth of the Budapest Labour Exchange said that in 1999, 46.8 million forints were spent on the two programmes, securing jobs for a total of 96 young people.

According to the Central Office of Statistics, the number of young people who were either in employment or studying has gradually grown in recent years and that of the unemployed has declined. With the end of financial assitance, state agencies lost sight of tens of thousands of unemployed young people which does not mean, however, that the latter found a regular job. Around 200,000 young people under 25, 13 per cent of the age group, neither work nor study, nor are they classified as unemployed. Numerous non-central forms of support also exist, but their quantifiable result is insignificant. Thus the Career Trust supports barely a few dozen young people to the tune of 150,000 forints a head, offering help to those between 18 and 30 in working out their ideas and in launching enterprises. Tibor Miklós, the Managing Director of the Trust, said that many turned to them who founded a company and leased premises, just because they could do this on extremely favourable terms, without having the slightest idea of what they wanted to do. It does happen that they have a plan but that—in the absence of prior market research—proves too daring. Thus a plan was recently submitted to the Career Trust for a sauna in which users would cool down with the help of artificially produced snowballs rather than water. The costs of Hungarian and international patents running to several million forints have repeatedly been covered by the Ministry of Economics.

The coevals of successful young entrepreneurs tend to take little note of their talent and hard work. They envy their lifestyle instead. No wonder. Many of them drive expensive cars, entertain on yachts on the high seas and take trips abroad the way others take a tram. But spectacular results are mostly backed by perseverance and hard work. The 24-year-old Péter Wonke and Balázs Szöllősy, his 25-year-old pal, started to operate soft drink dispensers four years ago. The first one put in operation took a mere 9,400 forints a week. They now have thirty dispensers and at the end of the week, when they draw up their accounts, an average of half a million forints worth of coins goes through the coin-counting automat in their office. In their first year they still serviced their dispensers themselves. Now they have men working for them. Levente Csikhelyi, who is 26, first made leather bags for friends and acquaintances when still a student at the Technical University, later he discovered that he could make money that way. First a friend and he produced articles in small numbers, and they hawked them themselves, now a workforce of 20 manufactures 170 different kinds of leather goods for them, from briefcases and wallets all the way to punch bags. Their

turnover is around 100 million forints a year and Levente had to interrupt his studies, because managing his firm kept him too busy.

An entrepreneur's lifestyle attracts around one in four of the young. Eight per cent of those over eighteen already own a share in some sort of enterprise. This is a generation that acts and thinks more rationally, which has made a move towards knowledge with a clout, that is towards the acquisition of information relating to economics, the law and administration. Their success, however, is not explained by schools. Perhaps they are only bolder and more self-confident than their fellows, and their goal—not having to work past the age of 35—is always there in front of their eyes. Family and children only enter their head when the firm stands on its own feet, operating as a self-filling cash register. It is estimated that a few thousand entrepreneurs in their twenties are trying their hands at something like that, but those who succeed can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The majority just keep on dreaming. An average young person—whether or not he or she has an income of their own—disposes of around 30,000 forints (about $110) a month. The youngest have an average of 8,000 forints spending money, 19 to 22 year olds already have 28,000 at their disposal, 23 to 26 year olds 40,000 and 27 to 30 year olds 45,000. Close to half of those questioned by the Medián Public Opinion and Marketing Institute are regularly supported by their parents or other relations. Pocket money is the norm amongst the 15 to 18 year olds, but only one in ten of those between 27 and 30 receive financial help from their families. Naturally many fewer of those with an income of their own receive such support but surprisingly the average amount received by the two categories is about the same.

Young people spend an average of 23 hours a week producing an income. For those already at work (40 per cent full time, 2 per cent part time and another 10 per cent occasionally, or at home, on the household plot), the average amounts to 43 hours a week for an average take-home pay of 43,000 forints a month. The young do not reckon with having to work more as they grow older, nor that they may have to work much less in the foreseeable future. In every cohort they expect to spend 40 hours a week in gainful employment at the age of forty. Anomalies in income are huge. The gap between the incomes of those employed in the public and the private sphere is growing apace and there are professions whose income is scandalously low. Typically, there are no more applicants than places in medical schools, since no one is tempted by the "minimum wage" obtainable after six years of study.

"I won't get up at half past six every morning for that sort of money." According to a staff member of a Budapest employment agency, you can hear that kind of talk ever more frequently from clients around twenty who have been unemployed for some time, and who are, however, unwilling to tell how they make a living. "I would earn at most five thousand forints a month more if I took a job. It's not worth it. If I occasionally take on something, I've got that sort of money." Thus spoke a young man in a village in County Somogy, quoted in a survey conducted by the Social Policy Department of the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest which covered the families of 55 unemployed families in eleven villages, questioning them on their survival strategies. According to the sociologist Ágnes Simonyi, there is a growing gap between the notions of employment and making a living. According to her, all this results in the spread of time and ener-

gy consuming techniques to make a living, that is occasional work, or the cultivation of small gardens in villages.

András Szabó, who heads the Kapocs (Link) Youth Selfhelp Office in Budapest, maintains that one ought to examine how the young actually make a living instead of relying on officially used categories. In his opinion it is wasteful to give up the drifters, and also dangerous. Unemployed young people in the big city can easily turn into the helpmates of criminals. What has started too is the reproduction of unemployment. Second generation unemployed appear ever more frequently amongst the clients of the office. The experience of the staff of the Újpalota Advisory Bureau for Unemployed Young People bears this out. Their ever growing clientele allows them to see around eight hundred young people a year. According to them the young value study less and less with the passing of time—despite the fact that official figures maintain that schooling is the best guarantee against unemployment. Thus last year 3–5 per cent of the first job unemployed had degrees or equivalent qualifications; 25–30 per cent, however, had, at the most, completed the eight grades of primary school. It is a sad reflection on the standards prevailing in Hungarian trade training that those who had completed vocational training or a trade high school accounted for close on 35 per cent of the unemployed.

Social workers claim that the key problem when it comes to the employment of long-term unemployed young persons (according to KSH figures, five thousand of those under 20 and 26 thousand of those between 20 and 25 had been unemployed for over a year) who are mostly poorly educated and also lack work experience, is getting them used to regular work, making them familiar with the rules that govern the operation of workplace, etc. According to them this does not require hundreds of millions of public money, it would be a great step forward if the state offered concessions in support of student unions managed by students which modelled the workaday world, were profit-oriented, and produced goods or services.

Last year the National Employment Public Trust (OFA) invited alternative labour market organizations to apply for a share in a 50 million forint fund and spent around 60 million on setting up information and consultancy bureaus. Over and above this close to 400 million were distributed among civil society organizations who trained handicapped young persons and helped them to find jobs. The Salva Vita Trust in Budapest is an example. Last year they placed around thirty mentally handicapped young people in suitable jobs. This sort of work does not, however, produce spectacular results that can be quantified and expressed in statistics. Fifteen civil society organizations recieved OFA moneys, and 405 unemployed were involved. In other words, the cost of success was close to a million forints a head in a year.

## Bulls in a china shop

Products targeted at the young market have unbelievably multiplied lately, all the way from toys and games to periodicals and TV channels and the interactive media. Advertising agencies are fast learning how to cut some ice with teenagers. "Mates. Party. Fanta" is how a soft drink is currently being advertised, pushing a lifestyle that excites the young.

What is needed to catch the eye of the young is something sexy if not downright pornographic. They have outgrown the infantilism when advertisements were fun, coloured images, enchanting sounds, movement and stories, in other words, fairy

tales. Quantifiable surveys demonstrate how much they have outgrown them. Between the ages of 12 and 18 young people think of sex once every fourth or fifth minute. Erotic overtones can therefore look forward to a good reception.

Sometimes the advertisers overshoot the mark. In the autumn of 1999, a spot in which a young woman was kissing a much younger boy created a stir. A drink dispenser was about to run dry and this was how she was helping herself to the lad's drink. The original English "Ask for more" was translated as "You never get enough." The principal character keeps to the logic of a kiss for a small coke but more for a large one, and he is off after his temptress with a larger bottle. It was criticized for presenting the young with a false ideal. Some mentioned paedophilia—what would be the reaction if the roles were reversed: an elderly man with a young teen?—others even spoke of prostitution: sexual contact for a material consideration. The fact is that the whole thing tends to underpin the view that you can get anything for money.

The essence of deliberately provoked scandal is that it is easier to catch the eye in that manner.

Taking the customer by assault belongs to this trend. But the young today, born into the information society, have been subjected to such assaults from birth and they have become inured to such advertisements. They are familiar with the tricks of the trade and the rules of the game. They know the texts by heart (rather than poetry). Thus they become immune to the usual advertising spiel, and advertisements stressing the image make them throw up.

In Hungary the majority of those surveyed rejected the Pepsi Generation Next campaign because the clips showing cups, combat jackets and dilly bags with the Pepsi logo carried the barely concealed message: please, please, buy me! But advertisements playing with the emotions do not go down well with the young. What they want is wit, irony and the unvarnished truth. Recognizing this, Sprite created their new slogan: "The image is bullshit. Trust your thirst." In J.C. Penney's highly successful Arizona Jeans advertisement, teenagers trash pseudo-advertisements that try to address them in their own language: "Cut out the cackle, let's see your pants."

Advertisements that put on an act of being youthful and funny are simply opportunist in the eyes of the young. It is therefore up to a cunning amalgam of marketing promotion and PR to take the message to places where the young gather, study, whoop it up in company, or simply pass by. That could well be a skate-board contest, a pop concert, cable TV (HBO, Music Box, Europort, Cartoon Network) or the shop itself. That's how road shows were conceived and prize contests, where the prizes are the goods to be advertised.

Thus the Spanish lollypop Chupa Chups puts in an appearance at the Grammy Awards (the musical Oscar), at the Venice Film Festival, wherever ready to wear clothing is presented and at the football World Cup. Fan clubs were founded in a number of countries in Europe. In Hungary they tour schools with a basketball team and quiz shows. Hostesses tour discos and let you lick the lollypops in their bras. A cheap and effective way of advertising. But the multinationals which go in for spectacular advertising, dressing bridges and whole buildings with their message, also try more intimate approaches when they want to reach the young. Such thinking gave rise to the Pepsi Isle, (an annual week-long rock festival on one of Budapest's Danube islands) with close to 300,000 visitors in the week, maximised to 60,000 a day for security reasons. The Coca Cola Beach House was similarly in-

## Doesn't the World Belong only to the 20-year Olds?

Dániel Nemes is barely 23 but he has owned his own firm for four years. And what a firm! Telnet Hungary is one of the largest Internet providers in the country. To what does the manager in his twenties owe his career? Perhaps to his job being his hobby. And he has different ideas about work than most twenty-year-olds do in general—which is why he bought out his two partners with whom he had started the firm in 1996.

Dániel first set eyes on a computer when he was five, in a neighbour's home. Barely eighteen months later, he had written his first programme for his ZX Spectrum. He was eight when his parents purchased a Commodore 64. Encouraged by the initial success, they soon enrolled him in a course. A straight road led from there to the Informatics Department of the Electrical Engineering Faculty at the Budapest University of Technology. Although this provides the best training within the state higher education system, he still dropped out after eighteen months. What he got was not enough. As he said, he had no desire to weld gadgets and to learn physics. What he was looking for was interconnecting and not encyclopædic knowledge.

Early in 1996 he started work at *Internetto,* the first Internet magazine in Hungary. Soon enough he was appointed systems manager. In his time the number of subscribers grew from 2,000 to 36,000. At about the half way stage, they replaced the Pentium 90—a museum piece by then—thus reducing the average emission time of newsletters from four and a half days to one and a half hours. In addition he switched the Internetto system to a scalable, load-bearing solution. He was responsible for the first online cinematic transmissions from the inauguration of the Hungarian Pavilion at the Internet Expo and he was amongst the first to operate a RealAudio server.

In the spring of 1997 he started his Telnet Internet access service. Later, after prolonged testing, he introduced 56 kilobyte telephone Internet access and then, again as the first in Hungary, the V90, which offered maximum speed over conventional telephone lines. Security technique activities available at the founding of the firm turned into a fully fledged business activity the next year. Its success was

spired, bringing Californian sand and palm trees to the "seashore" at Siófok on Lake Balaton. Song and dance at night was backed by body-painting and hairsculpting in the daylight hours, by beach volleyball and windsurf contests and fitness and aerobics presentations.

The number of firms that use street teams to prepare their campaigns is growing apace. Market researchers, barely out of their teens, hanging around clubs, parks and shopping malls, question their fellows on fashions, music or their idols, acting as seismographs predicting future trends. The great are not ashamed to learn from the small. Nóra Horváth Magyari, the Coca Cola public contacts manager said à propos the 4th Hungarian Student Advertising Contest: "Coca Cola is now learning from students. Coca Cola Hungary paid close attention to the entries and the best suggestions will be used."

publicized by the Hacker Competition. Enterprising hackers were asked to break into a self-developed server to obtain one million after tax, but Dániel's nut was too hard to crack.

Early in 1998 the firm started online marketing. They organized the first purely online advertizing campaign for Cisco Systems, manufacturers of network instruments. The most extensive Internet campaign so far, KTM Ózon, prepared jointly with McCann-Ericsson, was in the autumn of that same year. In the spring of 1999 they organized the First Internet Advertising Conference and not much later, taking their cue from the conventional advertising bar, the first Netbar where all those in the trade could meet informally. Dániel thinks that advertising agencies started to take note of the Internet because of the advertising conferences. "What I am dreaming about is that the word Internet should not be associated with bomb-making neo-Nazis or with paedophiles but with that huge amount of information and the unbelievable efficiency of communication which are characteristic of the web."

They closed 1999 with the first WAP system in operation in Hungary, which they developed for the Stop! port and opened 2000 with the development of the first WAP based freeweb in the country, perhaps the whole world. And where does he get the energy for all that? Dániel spends 20 minutes a day reading the news. If he notices something trend-setting, he looks into it, but that happens at most once or twice a week, and can be managed in half an hour. Once or twice a week he just surfs, looking for novelties; that can take up three to six hours. But he does spend ten to twenty hours a day in front of the server, depending on how much there is to negotiate about. What drives him is bringing people closer to the Internet. After all these years, it still enchants him with the huge amount of information it makes available, with freedom of speech and its operating self-regulation. "Frontiers disappear and so do distances, even at worst chances are more equal than in the off-line world." That is what makes the system attractive to him.

Dániel Nemes is not puffed up, in spite of his success. He thinks he started in the right place at the right time. He managed to recruit a skilled staff, and he judged trends well, he networked successfully, and he knew how to deal with problems of growth. And that, let's add, is certainly something. ❧

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The star of traditional marketing is setting. The young have turned their backs on the conventional media. They barely read the press, turn on the radio only for background noise, and given the spread of video and DVD, more and more rarely take in a movie, making a point of being ten minutes late, and missing the advertisements. Market researchers two or three years ago sat up and took note that a new generation is appearing which is not a continuation but a clear break. But for the past forty years firms based their long-term strategies precisely on what was ongoing. Having caught a consumer in your net improved your chances with their children and grandchildren. These days, however, the young vote with their feet in both department stores and boutiques: either they do not cross their thresholds, or else only to bring back and exchange what their thirty- or forty-year-old parents bought them.

"Oh God, Mum, where do you think you're living? No one buys this stuff anymore!!!" Every young parent of an adolescent must be familiar with such judgments and the bored voice they are expressed in. Advertising men must take note too, for that's where the money is.

Péter Szántó, an editor of *Kreatív,* a marketing and communications journal, opines: "This new generation appeared on the market like a bull in a china shop. Their advance guard are already consumers in a big way. Firms which want to gain their hearts, and their purses, will have to learn to think as they do." They must show an awareness that these children as a rule grew up in homes where dad and mum are both after hard cash, thus they themselves have had financial responsibilities since an early age. One in nine *gimnázium* students already disposes over a credit card, and more than 70 per cent have made up their minds that they will be home owners some day. At the age of 18 they already have their five-year-plan.

A survey carried out jointly by Szonda Ipsos and Hoffmann Research International demonstrates that the young hold firm opinions on most things and that they are able to provide their parents with up to date information. Not surprising then, in 65 per cent of families they are consulted on all financial decisions, all the way from the weekly shopping to the purchase of a car. According to their data, two thirds of those between 14 and 24 prefer prestigious brands. Wearing high status gear matters to them. They are convined that brand names stand for reliablility, that is that given brands guarantee quality. The majority are also of the opinion that certain brands are stylish and much bettern than others. One third show brand loyalty within a product category. To the young, brands matter most in the case of electronics entertainment products. Footwear runs second, then recreational drinks, jeans wear and cosmetics.

Research of this sort offers evidence that it is most important to please consumers in their adolescence, since ties then formed tend to be long lasting. The first kiss, scent, lipstick or chewing gum is the most memorable. That is why even industries targeting an adult market want to please the young. Reebok, for instance, fitted the soles of their shoes with a step-counting microchip. "The kids love it," the Reebok marketing manager says, "At that age they expect a prompt feed-back from every performance." Kodak offers teenies a single-use camera whose case contains face powder and a make-up mirror.

A May 2000 survey by the the Medián Public Opinion and Market Research Institute shows that the youngest of the 15–30 age groups spend a monthly 5,400 forints ($1 = 300 forints) on entertainment, close to three quarters of their average income. The 19- to 22-year-olds spend much more, a monthly 9,400 forints in cinemas, theatres, restaurants etc., but this is only barely more than one third of their income. For the 27 to 30 year olds the total amounts to a mere 5700 forints, one eighth of their monthly income. Naturally, places of entertainment and their clientèle differ. The very young prefer those which do not charge for entry, but no charge for girls is used as an enticement by many where men and boys have to pay for admission.

## What's in in Budapest?

Half a dozen places with open-air seating (standing room only, sometimes) are specially favoured by the young. Their secret is the nature of their crowd, and the shortage of beer gardens in the metropolitan area. It's often hard to get into the Ráckert and the Romkert at the Buda end

of the Elisabeth Bridge. Their joint turnover is often fifteen hundred a day, people often calling at both places. That two should occupy one seat is a commonplace, also that standing room is taken up as much as the seats so that you have to use your elbows to fight your way through to the bar. These well-lit places are frequented not only by young intellectuals but also by aging actors and others connected with films or the theatre. As a young sociology student points out, anyone who enters immediately sizes up who else is present. "Coming here is a social event. On the other hand, everywhere else a benevolent darkness allows you to disappear, which, however, makes communication impossible. Those who want to flirt or dance choose the latter."

In comparison with these two places, the mid-town Liszt Ferenc Square coffee shops, also fancied by many of the young, were called "business class" by many of those questioned. And yet it goes without saying that it is equally hard to find an empty table or seat on any of the many terraces on this promenade. According to their proprietors, each is frequented by the young in some fashionable occupation. According to Philippe Gallice, one of the proprietors of Frameven Ltd which operates the Café Vian, says his regulars are lawyers and brokers around twenty-five. Laptop yuppies are daytime regulars; they treat the promenade as a base to do business from. The clientèle of the Pesti Est Café is younger. According to György Tamás, one of the proprietors of Estinvest Ltd which operates it, it is the meeting place of secondary school students mornings and afternoons, and of young media and advertising people and well to do university students at night. He adds: "Frequenting the Liszt Ferenc Square is the in thing to do."

Those who prefer a relatively cheap place in a pretty expensive area use the Mediterrán opposite. According to the proprietor, it is a melting pot, a refuge for everybody who cannot find a table elsewhere. The Incognito, the first to open its doors six years ago, has its own special clientèle. It is a place of extremes, with the greatest number of tattoos and skinheads but with a reserved table for an old lady, a local resident. A card, bearing her name is there as evidence. Generally most describe their own clientèle in much the same terms, but they all insist that "their women" are "the best".

The espressos on Liszt Ferenc Square are cheek by jowl, but according to the proprietors every new one raised the turnover of those already there. The number of visitors had reached that critical point where the probability was great indeed that anyone on his own was likely to meet somebody he already knew. Others explain success that the young go on café crawls. Generally the same people appear here, there and everywhere.

In the *házibuli*—the parties held in a home—of old everyone used to move to the kitchen. There, squashed into a tight space, you got to know each other and communicated. Everyone is looking for that feeling now, for the kitchen, choosing a destination depending on the kind of party they were looking for. Young professionals around thirty, and younger ones still aiming for that lifestyle, made up most of the public who simply settled on the lawn when the Zöld Pardon (Green Pardon) opened in 1999 at the Buda end of the Petőfi Bridge. "Beer, sausages, music, just like at a miners' gala at home" was the comment in Romanian of a young man in a shell suit, equipped with a cellular phone and gold chains. He, and his three similarly accoutred companions were already reckoned regulars. Last year they would not have fitted in yet. "That's how it happens when a place is too successful."

Bea Munkácsy, one of the proprietors of the company which runs the place, is making excuses. "Some very young people have appeared who want to take a great big bite out of life right here, and some businessmen have appeared whose affairs are as dark as the Mercedes they travel in." And drugs too arrived with them, so that today there are security guards at both entrances, to search customers.

According to some pupils there are a number of *gimnáziums* in Budapest where grass is smoked during the breaks. Smoke anyway rises from the loos, but the scent gives away what exactly is smoked. Other methods for getting high are cheaper, for instance, one involving a domestic sodawater making contrivance. According to Katalin Járó, the psychologist of the Radnóti Miklós Gimnázium, one of Budapest's prestigious secondary schools, around a quarter of those of secondary school age now take drugs at parties. "In youth culture, drugs and drink are no longer a criticism of school as they used to be, but a part of leisure pursuits, used by many to combat boredom. You've got to be laid back in company. It is forbidden to look sad." ❧


JUDIT SZALAINYAY

*Károly Werfer:* The First Labourer of the Nation, *1860.*
*Count István Széchenyi is surrounded by his principle achievements.*
*Library of the Academy of Sciences.*

John Lukacs

# The Tragedy of Two Hungarian Prime Ministers*



Béla Imrédy was the Prime Minister of Hungary from May 1938 to February 1939: a very crucial time. This was a turning-point in the political history of Hungary as well as in Imrédy's life. Before 1938–1939 the main principle of every Hungarian government and of Hungarian public opinion was to aim for an eventual revision of the excessive and injurious provisions of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, which had deprived Hungary of more than two-thirds of its traditional territory and left three million Hungarians under foreign rule. But in March 1938, after the German incorporation of Austria, the Third Reich appeared at the very frontiers of Hungary, with tremendous external and internal consequences. Thereafter the principal duty of Hungarian governments was to maintain Hungary's independence at least to a considerable degree. But about this there was no consensus among the political leaders, or within public opinion. A fair amount of Hungarian independence remained until the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944; but—as this reviewer has stated often—during the years 1938–1945 a political and intellectual and emotional civil war was raging in Hungary between those who believed that Hungary's exterior and interior alignment with Hitler's Third Reich was desirable as well as advantageous for the nation, and those who saw it to be catastrophic as well as immoral.

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* Péter Sipos, ed.: *Imrédy Béla a vádlottak padján* (Béla Imrédy in the Dock). Budapest, 1999, 616 pp. Budapest, Osiris; Antal Czettler: *"A mi kis élethalál kérdéseink." A magyar külpolitika a hadba lépéstől a német megszállásig.* ("Our Little Life-or-Death Questions." Hungarian Foreign Policy from the Entry into the War to the German Occupation) Budapest, Magvető, 2000, 642 pp.

Imrédy was one of the central figures of this contest, and well beyond the time of his Premiership. The most debatable (and crucial) event of his career was his sudden and unexpected decision, crystallizing during a few days in early September 1938, to choose his alignment with the Third Reich and National Socialism. Ever since that the people, his contemporaries and later historians, have been discussing the sources of that mysterious turnabout: that is, Imrédy's motives and purposes. Now we have adequate documentation in a massive volume, replete with documents and testimonies and Imrédy's own words, recording Imrédy's postwar trial (November 1945). He was condemned to death as a war criminal and executed in February 1946.

Unlike most of the spokesmen of a National Socialist inclination Imrédy was a man of more than considerable intelligence. His expert knowledge in high financial matters led to his presidency of the National Bank of Hungary in 1935. The reputation of his conservatism and of his judiciousness made the Regent Horthy appoint Imrédy to the Prime Ministership in May 1938. This came at a time when the German and National Socialist influences in Hungary grew by leaps and bounds. (In the election of May 1939, the first national election of universal and secret suffrage, National Socialists won no less than 30 per cent of the vote. Their popularity was even greater throughout 1938.) Consequently Imrédy's prime ministership was welcomed with great relief by the moderates in Parliament and throughout the country, by old-fashioned conservatives, as well as by Liberals and even by the small Social Democratic Party. Imrédy's first public speeches confirmed this trust. He also decreed a few severe measures against National Socialists and their agitation.

Then, in late August 1938, the Regent and Imrédy and their entourage visited Hitler at a great state occasion in Northern Germany. A few days after his return Imrédy spoke at Kaposvár. The tone of his speech was in startling contrast with his earlier pronouncements. Thereafter more and more of his statements and decisions showed a closer and closer alignment not only to the Third Reich but to the ideology of a national socialism. Increasingly they suggested his purpose of a drastic reformation of Hungary's social structure, including a reduction of the existing features of a remnant feudalism but also of parliamentarism. This brought about a serious political crisis within the goverment party, a split forcing Imrédy to resign. His next move was to form a new national movement, not a mere party, led by himself. The Regent felt compelled to reappoint Imrédy as Prime Minister for the second time. The latter, among other things, was already proposing a second anti-Jewish law, restricting the civil rights of the Jewish population of Hungary severely. But now, Imrédy's political adversaries moved. They found documents proving that Imrédy had a Jewish ancestor, three generations removed. This made it possible for the Regent to force Imrédy's resignation in February 1939. The bitterness between

Horthy and Imrédy persisted thereafter. It was one of the keys to Imrédy's subsequent behaviour.

He was no longer Prime Minister but his political ambitions and his career went on, with not inconsiderable effects. His convictions of not only the necessity but of the merits of a German alignment, together with his convictions of the validity of the ideas of National Socialism (and of anti-Semitism) marked his personality and his political career. He was not a member of the various Hungarian Arrow Cross (National Socialist) parties, mostly because of their intrigues and because of his appreciation of their intellectual poverty; but he was their ally, almost without exception. In Parliament and elsewhere he attacked the cautious international and domestic policies and moves of his successors. He worked with German officials and agents, including the sinister Edmund Veesenmayer in 1943, who then in March 1944 would be empowered by Hitler to be his principal commissioner in Hungary. Imrédy's animosity against the Regent was also evident. When Hitler decided to occupy Hungary and install an entirely subservient government under Sztójay, Imrédy welcomed that. Two months later he was made its Minister of Economics. He made himself leader of a new paramilitary organization, The Comradeship of the Eastern Front. After August 1944 he withdrew from political activities, but he remained in basic accord with the extremist Szálasi Arrow Cross regime, retreating with them to Austria where he lived to see the end of World War II. American military agents arrested him soon thereafter; he was brought to Budapest, tried, and condemned to death.

Unlike many of the post-war trials (and not only in Hungary) there was not much that was discreditable in Imrédy's trial, (especially given its circumstances under the Russian occupation of Hungary). This is why the materials in this thick volume are of great value for historians. Imrédy spoke in his own defence intelligently, and fairly honestly. He defended himself better than another wartime Premier, László Bárdossy, whose trial preceded Imrédy's by a few days.[1] Credit is due, too, to Imrédy's court-appointed lawyer for the defense. There were none of the interruptions or unseemly scenes that marked some of the other trials of "war criminals."

At the end of the trial one of the appointed judges (perhaps even two) voted in secret session for a conditional pardon, in favour of life imprisonment instead of the death penalty. They were overruled by the Justice Minister Ries (who would be beaten to death by the Communist police five years later). The only concession was execution not by hanging but by a firing squad. Imrédy was a sincerely believing Catholic, and he faced his executioners bravely.

1 ■ Bárdossy's trial has been reprinted (and debated) often. A small detail during the Imrédy trial, hitherto unknown, is new evidence at the cost of Bárdossy's record: proof that in early April 1944 Bárdossy, otherwise retired from government, was the author of the declaration of the Sztójay regime, affirming the joint destiny of Hungary and the Third Reich (and attacking the previous government of Kállay).

Like Bárdossy, Imrédy deserved conviction but not execution. This is of course the judgment of this historian. But this is not the occasion to argue this. The importance of the present volume of documents is their illumination of Imrédy's character—and, even more interestingly, the reason for his great reversal in August and September 1938. For a long time it was believed that (a) Imrédy was not only an extremely ambitious man but an opportunist; (b) that his unexpected troubles with British journalists at that very time made him distrustful and disillusioned with Britain and with British people. There is much truth in these reconstructions.[2] The documentation of his trial, and especially some of Imrédy's own statements, reveal something additional. This is that Imrédy's conviction of the merits of Nationalist Socialism preceded his "public conversion" in August 1938. An example of this is his, hitherto unpublished, memorandum to the then Prime Minister Darányi as early as March 1937, when Imrédy was still President of the National Bank: "I must begin," Imrédy wrote, "that in my opinion the Jewish question is one of the most important, and perhaps the decisive question for Hungary." But besides this early suggestion of Imrédy's anti-Semitic convictions, he goes on to write that there is more than that: Hungarian society is still too feudal-patriarchal, meaning backward. This cries out for reforms, strong and deep reforms indeed. International socialism is contemptible; not only the future but the present is a *nationalist* socialism. This belief, hardened into a conviction, marked Imrédy's life ever since that time.

He did not depart from it even during his imprisonment and trial. He found it entirely reconcilable with his own Catholic beliefs. He certainly found it accordable with his views of his own career. He was ambitious, because of the confidence he had in his intellectual powers. In 1938 he thought that he was destined to lead Hungary into a new chapter of its history, with himself as a leader of great social reforms. Yet he was not destined to become a great political leader for many reasons, very much including the blinkers of his own ambition, but also because of his ideological ways of thinking. His hatreds (and his most hate-ridden expressions) were directed at opposing ideas, opposing groups, entire nations rather than at particular persons. One exception was Horthy, the Regent, whom he never forgave. During his trial he said that he forgave many of his enemies, and there is at least some reason to hope that this was not simply a rhetorical device. One of the few—there are few— evidences to his credit during the trial was evidence (affirmed not only by himself) that immediately after the German occupation of Hungary and the installation of the new government, Imrédy spoke up (in vain) against arresting his great adversary, the then deposed Prime Minister Miklós Kállay, to whose tragic destiny I shall now turn.

2 ■ The latter episode, among other things, is masterfully researched and described in D. András Bán's study of British–Hungarian relations 1938–41 *(Illuziók és csalódások. Nagy-Britannia és Magyarország 1938–1941*, Budapest, 1998, especially pp. 137–145.

Miklós Kállay (1887–1967) was one of the bravest—and, in my opinion, one of the greatest—prime ministers of Hungary. For reasons difficult to assess, no biography of Kállay and no history of his prime ministerhip has existed until now, before this excellent and detailed volume by Antal Czettler. There is, however, a regrettable shortcoming in the title of his book which is deceiving. (The English translation of the title: "Our little life-or-death questions" (this is a quotation from Kállay)—Hungarian foreign policy from the entry into the war until the German occupation.") It gives the impression that this volume comprises nothing but the attempts—futile as they were—of Kállay's foreign policy. Yet it was not these attempts that should establish Kállay's historical reputation. They were inseparable from his domestic struggles—struggles with pressures of public opinion—which he waged bravely and not unsuccessfully, and through which (this is the crux of the matter) he avoided Hitler's unrestricted control over Hungary (whether by means of a German occupation, or whether through the triumph of Hungarian pro-German forces) for two years. These activities of Kállay's premiership are well documented and described in Czettler's book, for which "The Prime Ministership of Miklós Kállay" should have been the proper title.

Kállay descended from one of the oldest and deepest-rooted families in Hungary. He and his ancestors did not enter the ranks of the aristocracy; they were members of a class that could be best described by the French term, *petite noblesse terrienne.* He had a distinguished but not particularly remarkable career in public service until, in March 1942, the Regent summoned him and asked him to assume the burdensome prime ministership. It seems that Kállay was proposed to Horthy by the latter's conservative and sagacious adviser, Count István Bethlen, Prime Minister from 1920 to 1931; it also seems that Bethlen and Horthy wanted, as early as February 1942, no matter how cautiously, to lessen the Hungarian alignment with Hitler's Germany, an alignment that had led, under Kállay's predecessor, to Hungary's declaration of war against Soviet Russia as well as against the United States, and to a British declaration of war on Hungary two months before his appointment. That was, in sum, the policy that Kállay pursued for two years, a policy entirely in accord with his personal and patriotic convictions. It was overturned by Hitler himself who recognized and condemned Kállay's inclinations from the beginning and who, finally in March 1944, ordered the German occupation of Hungary, and the installation of an unreservedly pro-German government. Thereupon Kállay, threatened by arrest, fled to the neutral Legation of Turkey in Budapest, from which he was later extracted and transported to the concentration camp of Mauthausen. At the end of the war Mauthausen was liberated by the Americans; Kállay lived in Italy for a few years and then in exile in the United States, where he died in 1967. His ashes were brought back to his modest family seat in eastern Hungary where they are buried in the small family chapel. Of the six prime ministers of Hungary between 1938–1944, Béla Imrédy and László Bárdossy and Döme Sztójay were convicted

and executed, Pál Teleki committed suicide, Miklós Kállay (and Géza Lakatos, who was Prime Minister only for seven weeks, August–October 1944) were the only ones who survived the war, though in exile. There may be a moral in this somewhere.

Before March 1944 (and thereafter) Imrédy and Bárdossy were convinced that Hungary's only hope consisted in her alignment with the Third Reich, complying with most German requests (including what Berlin demanded to be done with Hungarian Jews). Teleki (1939–41) and Kállay (1942–44) thought otherwise, even as they were aware of the immense difficulties of Hungary's geographic and of their own situation. With all respect due to Teleki, it may be said that Kállay's situation in 1942–44 was even more difficult than Teleki's in 1939–41. About Teleki the German government was ambivalent: Goebbels disliked him (and the "feudal" Hungary he represented); Hitler was indifferent, as long as Hungary was furnishing him the goods he wanted. Of Kállay, Hitler and Ribbentrop and Goebbels were suspicious from the very beginning. Soon their suspicions congealed into outright hostility. This happened well before the Germans gathered information about Kállay's secret efforts to get in touch with agencies of the Western Powers. After September 1943 the German authorities and agencies in Hungary were ordered to restrict their contacts with the Prime Minister entirely. By that time Hitler was beginning to convince himself that Hungary must be occupied sooner or later. Yet Kállay was able to maintain himself and the relative independence of Hungary until March 1944.

In April 1943 Kállay went to Rome. He (and he was not alone in this at the time) hoped to extract from Mussolini a promise to lead a bloc of small states whose course would be more and more independent from that of Hitler. Mussolini said as much as that he could not do anything. Then the Allies invaded Sicily, and Italy and Mussolini fell. Even before that Kállay instructed and allowed certain Hungarian diplomats to enter into clandestine negotiations with the British (and the Americans), mainly in Turkey, but also in Switzerland and Portugal. The records of these contacts had been well known for some years; they are detailed extensively (perhaps too extensively) by Czettler. Except for establishing the evidence of the existence of a non-Nazi Hungary, they did not lead anywhere. The reasons for this are obvious: the Anglo-Americans could not abandon the slogan of "unconditional surrender" (even though that was hardly more than a slogan); their wartime alliance with Soviet Russia they thought they could not (with many reasons) endanger. Kállay, and many others, thought and hoped that after the Allied invasion of Italy an Anglo–American landing in Yugoslavia would come as a matter of course. This did not happen. Despite Churchill's occasional plans in that regard, it was scotched at the Teheran conference in December 1943. What Kállay, and many Hungarians, were concerned about was not only the danger of German brutality but also the approaching might of Soviet Russia. Yet the hope to surrender to the British and to the

Americans but not to the Russians was a chimera. By January 1944 Kállay recognized this. He now changed his policy somewhat. Having had to live through the catastrophe of the Hungarian Second Army in deep Russia the year before, he wanted to withdraw the Hungarian forces in the Ukraine and in Poland to the Carpathian borders of Hungary; he, and Horthy, hoped against hope that—perhaps—Hitler would consent to that. Meanwhile, the secret contacts with the British and the Americans intermittently continued. Hitler knew what all this was about, and in March 1944 decided to put an end to it, including of course Kállay.

It was not only with the German danger and pressure that Kállay had to struggle. In 1942 he inherited a parliament where the overwhelming majority consisted of a government party that was far from cohesive, most of its members being at least partly sympathetic to the National Socialists and to Imrédy's own extreme-Right party. Like Hitler, these knew very well what Kállay was trying to do and what kind of a man he was. He was publicly attacked, criticized, and secretly conspired against, not only by the Arrow Cross but also by his predecessors Bárdossy and Imrédy. In May 1943 Kállay dared to adjourn Parliament so as not to allow a public forum to those who regarded (and often said) that his policy amounted to near-treason. In retrospect, it is impressive how much of relative independence and freedom could prevail in Hungary until March 1944. Very much of that was due to Kállay. Among other matters, had it not been for him, the deportation of Hungarian Jews and their eventual mass killing in Auschwitz and elsewhere would have begun one or two years earlier.

Kállay deserves solid respect, and not only because of the record of the Second World War. He incarnated many of the virtues of an old—yes, half-feudal and patriarchal—Hungary that was not devoid of democratic and humanitarian features. He was, as I wrote above, not an aristocrat, and had no personal interests in defending the somewhat archaic and old-fashioned social structures of his country. But he was a protector and even a champion of old-fashioned decency. That old-fashioned Hungary has now vanished forever. Sixty years after those events there are people in Hungary now who say that Kállay and his kind pursued vain illusions; that Hungary had nothing to hope from the English-speaking Powers, and nothing to hope from Hitler's defeat (and, as some of them even go so far as to mutter, nothing from Kállay's protection of Hungarian Jews). Yes. Nothing but honour. ❧

Kristóf Kállay

# Endgame 1944

## A Wartime Prime Minister's Son Remembers

In the early hours of March 19th 1944, Keresztes-Fischer, the Home Secretary, rang my father to tell him he was on his way to the Prime Minister's Office since the Germans were on the move on all our borders. My father ordered me to be present too, and I immediately went up to the Castle, to his office and residence, taking my wife, our two-and-a-half-month-old son, and his nurse. I rang the General Staff but Bajnóczy, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, could not be located. It took two hours before I managed to find him; he turned up together with a wire from Szombathelyi, the Minister of Defence, which stated that no measures whatever were to be taken until the Regent got back, and that a friendly reception should be given to the Germans. Fortunately, I found two officers who proved truly helpful, Colonel Gyula Kádár and Major Kálmán Kéri of the General Staff, who in spite of the opposition of Bajnóczy, who was skulking in a corner, rang the various corps commanders and asked them to present themselves at the Prime Minister's Office. In response to my father, Colonel Generals Beregffy and János Vörös declared that in view of the absence of the Supreme War Lord and of Szombathelyi's wire to Bajnóczy, they were not prepared to offer any kind of resistance. Anyway, there was not a single military unit in a state of readiness, except for the 1st Army in the Carpathians and the 2nd Army in Northern Transylvania. Náday, the commanding general of the Army in Russia, declared that he was prepared to accept the Prime Minister's instructions but he was unable to bring home troops who were constantly in action because of the absence of the appropriate transport. It may well be of more use for the Regent to have any army—even a battle-weary one—at his disposal later. I rang Lajos Veres, the Commanding General of the Army in Northern Transylvania. He showed himself ready to alert the three army corps at his disposal, but he asked my father to consider that nine Romanian corps were stationed in Southern Transylvania, which would promptly move, even without German encouragement. The German military attaché meanwhile notified us that eleven German divisions were deployed against

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*At a recent session of the Scholars' Club of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences,* ***Kristóf Kállay,*** *son of and private secretary to Miklós Kállay, wartime Prime Minister (1942–44) of Hungary, described the dramatic events his father lived through following the German occupation of Hungary.*

us, the Romanian, Slovak and Croat armies being mobilized as well; those, however, would not cross the frontier in the absence of Hungarian resistance.

There we stood with a bunch of useless generals—Bohry and the Corps stationed in Szombathely being the only exception—meanwhile there were reports over the phone that the Germans in the provinces were already engaged in manhunts for Jews. Not moving from the telephone I informed our Jewish friends, various politicians at risk, Peyer, Passai, István Bethlen, internment camps for the French and Poles, friendly diplomats, the Papal Nuncio and the Swiss, Turkish and Finnish ministers. Meanwhile, Ghiczy's coded telegramme to his wife also arrived. Air Vice Marshal Hellebronth, the commander of the Air Force, was not prepared to take measures to have available aircraft concealed on provincial airbases but this proved to be possible with the help of Kádár and Kéri. An hour later Flight First Lieutenant István Csanády, a relative of my wife's, hastily reached the Prime Minister's Office, saying that his aircraft was fuelled and that he would take my father to Turkey. Of course my father was not prepared to leave the sinking ship. Dawn was not far off when two SS men turned up with the intention of taking my father to the German legation. Fortunately my young brother András was there in his Life Guard 1st Lieutenant uniform, with handgrenades on his belt, so the two Germans left.

The wife of the Turkish minister telephoned my mother and told her she was welcome if she cared to come. She handed the receiver to me and I thanked the Turkish minister for the invitation. He confirmed that both my father and my mother were welcome at the Legation.

Meanwhile the Germans had arrived in Budapest but they did not impose any traffic restrictions. Visitors, frightened out of their wits, arrived in quick succession. The radical opposition politician Endre Bajcsy Zsilinszky came in the company of General (ret.) János Kiss and demanded prompt armed resistance. At my father's request, I sent a car for Samu Stern, the chairman of the Hebrew Congregation. My father and Stern embraced each other. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky wanted to arm Stern right there in the ante-chamber.

There was news that the Regent's special train was on its way back at a snail's pace from Hitler at Klessheim, being held up at every station, until it reached Hegyeshalom, at the Hungarian border. My father called for Ambrózy, who headed the Regent's office, and General Béla Miklós, who headed the military office, asking them to meet the Regent even before he reached Budapest. He first talked to Ambrózy in my presence, asking him to inform the Regent of all that happened, then he wished to talk to Béla Miklós. Miklós was hostile, declaring that military matters were none of the Prime Minister's business. He would make up his own mind what he would tell the Regent. Later, in Soviet-occupied Debrecen, he headed the Provisional Government, becoming the first satellite Prime Minister.

My father and I waited at Kelenföld Station. Finally, the Regent's train arrived. In the car, on the way to the Castle, the Regent told us what had happened at Klessheim where he saw Hitler. He ordered a Crown Council to be convened in the afternoon. This was made up of members of the government, members of the Supreme Defence Council, of the heads of the Regent's military office and his secretariat and, of course, the Chief of the General Staff. The Regent gave an account of his visit. When he finished, my father and Keresztes-Fischer declared that all measures taken, dismissal of the government

or appointment of a government, were illegal and null and void. My father said he would no longer countersign any measure taken by the Regent, nor would he authenticate the minutes of the Crown Council. That was the end of the session. My father still stayed with the Regent and mentioned that the Germans had looked for him, and István Bethlen, in the Prime Minister's Office. The Regent was indignant and ordered General Károly Lázár, the commander of the Life Guards, to take all necessary measures to protect the Prime Minister's Office. This happened immediately, and when we got back my brother András and another Life Guard lieutenant called Zólyomi were waiting for us at the entrance with sub-machine guns.

I rang the steward at our Kállósemjén estate asking him to send up a lorry the next day for our belongings. Then we went to bed. At first light András called from the lodge saying that a whole lot of German trucks were there, filled with German soldiers and officers, wishing to speak to the former Prime Minister. I woke up my father and asked him what we should do. He started to dress and asked my mother to pack a small suitcase. Fortunately, my brother András came up, leaving Zólyomi in charge of the Life Guards whose rifles were cocked. He said that when he received his training as a Life Guard he was shown secret underground passages that connected the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Castle. He would lead us to the Castle through them. I rang the Regent's Office. Gyula Tost, the aide-de-camp, woke up the Regent and his wife and they immediately instructed me to bring over the whole family to them in the Castle. After innumerable steps along the underground passage we reached the Regent's rooms. They were both there, in dressing gowns, waiting for us. Somewhere on the steps, András, our baby son, had lost his dummy, and he would not stop screaming. The Regent's wife remembered that she had kept one of her grandson's as a memento, but that was not good enough for our baby and the screaming continued.

The Regent's wife arranged for rooms for my mother, my wife and the nurse. We men took tea with the Regent. My father said that if he stayed, the Germans would make difficulties. The Regent answered that it was his own business who he asked to his house. Then I mentioned the Turkish minister's invitation, and the Regent felt reconciled to that. I therefore rang Mr Kececi and, with reference to our conversation of the previous day, I asked for political asylum on behalf of my father. The Turkish minister immediately agreed. I rang Gedeon Fáy Halász, who had been at school with me and who had served as my father's secretary when he was Minister of Foreign Affairs, and asked him to pick up my father at the back entrance of the Castle Gardens. He was soon there. My father, with his small suitcase and equipped with a revolver took his seat in the car, and the minister was already there waiting at the gate of the Turkish Legation. He mentioned that his government had provided him with full authority, and that my mother was also most welcome.

We stayed on in the Royal Castle until Sztójay—formerly Hungarian minister in Berlin, the new Germanophile Prime Minister—reported to the Regent that the German minister had protested because of my presence. The Regent said nothing to me but I heard about this German step from colleagues in the Foreign Ministry. I therefore reported to the Regent and asked for permission to move to my aunt's estate at Süttő with my wife and child. This happened with the cooperation of the SS and the gendarmerie.

My mother stayed in the Castle until September and then she too moved into the Turkish legation. Mr Kececi and his wife Melek proved themselves angels as hosts. After October 15th, when the Arrow Cross took over, I was able to visit them just once.

Meanwhile the Soviets approached ever closer. After Romania changed sides on August 23rd, they crossed the Bulgarian frontier without declaring war, although the two countries had not been at war with each other. They shot and killed the Prince Regent and Prime Minister Filov who had sought asylum in the Turkish legation in Sofia. The circumstances of the latter are still not clear. The shooting happened when he left the legation. This prompted the Hungarian Arrow Cross government, which came to power on October 15th and was pressured by the Germans to inform the Turkish minister that they no longer recognized their right to grant asylum and that they would therefore take Kállay from the legation. This was underlined by the presence of a guard of greatly increased strength and members of the Gestapo were also observed in surrounding streets. The minister informed my father of all this who declared that he did not wish to endanger the lives of members of the legation and of the many refugees who had gathered there, and that he would leave if necessary.

Meanwhile, the Turks had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany, a move followed by a declaration of war. There was nothing now to restrain the Germans. Gábor Kemény, the Arrow Cross Foreign Minister, called for the Turkish envoy and faced him with an ultimatum: Kállay had to leave the legation building by November 19th, the next day; if he did not do so they would send in the police to fetch him. The Turkish minister protested, but there was not enough time to consult his government. He was therefore forced to give way to a show of force. At four in the afternoon a number of cars arrived, Hungarian and German police and armed SS men. My father, in a fur shooting jacket and carrying his small suitcase, took leave of his splendid hosts and my poor mother, and left the legation. He was taken to the Ministry of the Interior and on to the Margit Körút prison and then, for a few days, the Sopronkőhida gaol near the Austrian border, with two Hungarian gendarmes and two SS men as guards. On February 15th he was moved to Mauthausen and on to Dachau. On April 24th the V.I.P. prisoners were taken to the South Tyrol, where the Americans liberated them.

My mother stayed on at the Turkish legation, where Mr and Mrs Kececi took care of her. When a burning Soviet plane crashed into the building, they all took refuge in the air-raid shelter. On February 7th they came up for a breath of fresh air, and a German rifle grenade killed my mother. The next day, she was buried in the legation garden.

After my father's liberation, my family having settled in Capri after the war, I visited Mr and Mrs Kececi in Turkey in 1946, and expressed my thanks, those of my family and of many Jewish and non-Jewish compatriots, who had found refuge there. They were later *en poste* in Brussels and Paris, and whenever their ship passed through Naples, I called on them on board, and they told me much about life in the air-raid shelter and about my poor mother's last day.

My grateful thanks are due to my Turkish friends for the courageous stand they took at the time. ❧

Antal Czettler

# Miklós Kállay's Attempts to Preserve Hungary's Independence

As a result of unfortunate and erroneous decisions on the part of its prime minister, during the eleven months the Bárdossy government was in office, Hungary became embroiled in war with three major powers, the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States. Although the declaration of war on America could hardly have been avoided owing to strong German pressure, Bárdossy overstepped the bounds of diplomacy in stating to Pell, America's pro-Hungarian minister in Budapest, that Hungary was a sovereign state and had not been responding to German pressure, and when he said that she was finally burning her remaining bridges with the West.[1] Bárdossy gave advance notice of the declaration neither to the Regent, nor to Parliament. Accordingly, when receiving the departing United States' chargé d'affaires, Howard K. Travers, on December 16, 1941, Horthy informed the Americans that, for his part, he regarded Bárdossy's declaration of war as invalid and unconstitutional.[2] Through his conduct and his foreign policy the Premier had finally forfeited the Regent's confidence. Because of the country's isolation, voices in Horthy's immediate entourage urged that Bárdossy resign, and a government led by a politician committed to no particular side in the conflict be formed. To replace Bárdossy, Horthy appointed Miklós Kállay, a personal friend, chairman of the National Irrigation Authority, and a former minister of agriculture. Kállay enjoyed the trust of the anti-German, liberal-conservative and "Anglophile" (as contemporaries put it) circles gathered around Count István Bethlen. On the other hand, he had no previous experience of high office and could only hope that the Germans, even if they mistrusted him, would not oppose his appointment as prime minister. At the Regent's re-

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quest Bárdossy tendered his resignation, and on March 9, 1942 the Kállay government was formed.[3]

When forming his government Kállay had two objectives: the first was to protect Hungary's constitutional and parliamentary system of government against the Germans and the Hungarian extreme right-wing parties, and secondly to take the country out of the Axis camp and into that of Britain and America, whom he regarded as representatives of Christian civilization. In addition, under no circumstances did he wish Hungary to fall within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. Before the collapse of Communism in 1989, the majority of the historians in Hungary accused Kállay of having no aim other than the preservation of the Horthy system for the postwar period. Even the comparatively moderate Gyula Juhász wrote: "Power had to be retained at all costs: this was the key issue in Hungary's wartime foreign policy".[4]

In opposition to this, the former diplomat Aladár Szegedy-Maszák pointed out in his memoirs that Gyula Juhász, along with many other historians, identifies saving the régime as the main goal of Kállay's foreign policy, even though Juhász is unable to produce documentary evidence for this. "He forces the issue into the procrustean bed of Marxist-Leninist ideology. He considers the social class of Kállay and his associates to be the crucial thing, obstinately ignoring the fact that we were thinking not of the régime, but of the country".[5] When they accuse the Kállay government of cowardice in its refusal to oppose the Germans openly, Juhász and historians who incline to his views consistently forget to mention that after March 19, 1944—the day the Germans occupied Hungary—those very events took place (for example, the deportation and extermination of Hungarian Jews) which Kállay's cautious foreign policy wished to avoid.

## Kállay and the Hungarian right. Hungarian opposition to the "Final Solution"

Miklós Kállay's government was received with misgivings not only by the Germans and the Hungarian extreme right-wing parties, but also by the strong right wing of the Government party itself. Therefore, in order to secure a solid majority when Parliament voted its confidence, he was forced to make concessions to the right wing of the Government party (the Party of Hungarian Life). In his first speech to Parliament as Prime Minister, he declared that he would continue his predecessor's foreign policy, would continue the struggle against Soviet Bolshevism, and even that he would take a firmer stance against Bolshevism than Bárdossy had done. Concurrently, in order to counter suspicions on the right, he submitted a bill to the legislature for the appropriation of Jewish-owned landed property.[6] According to his memoirs, he saw this bill as the first step towards land reform. At the same time, he professed faith in Hungary's Christian traditions and in the parliamentary form of government. His inaugural speech was received by the Government majority without particular

enthusiasm. From this he concluded that he could not speak in public with complete sincerity and that he had to conceal his true aims.[7]

The response abroad to the new Premier's speech was not unequivocal. The greater part of the press in Britain and America interpreted it as signalling continuation of Bárdossy's foreign policy; the Germans, on the other hand, received it with misgivings, since despite all its anti-Bolshevik rhetoric the speech deviated somewhat from the national socialist phraseology used by politicians in the Axis countries. Kállay's anti-Bolshevik statements were based on heartfelt conviction, he thought he could counter German mistrust by means of his anti-Soviet speeches. Also, since he was not completely clear as to the close character of the alliance between Britain, America and the Soviet Union, he believed that the leading Western politicians would forgive him such utterances, since in the first half of 1942, with German forces advancing towards the Volga and the Caucasus, it was impossible in Central Europe to pursue an anti-German policy without risking the nation's existence. His later moves were made more difficult by these very statements: as leading circles in Britain and America saw it, Kállay changed his policy only when confronted with German defeat. The British historian C. A. Macartney correctly remarks that these leading circles accepted at face value Kállay's statements in the spring of 1942, and did not believe him when he, sincerely, sought links with Britain and the United States.[8]

The Germans viewed the formation of the Kállay government with mistrust from the outset. During talks with Sztojay, Hungary's minister in Berlin, Foreign Minister Ribbentrop declared in early March 1942: "This change of government in Hungary is totally incomprehensible to us".[9] Initially there was no great friction between the two states with regard to it. When, on account of increasing tension between Hungary and Romania, Kállay visited Hitler at his headquarters in June 1942, the talks passed off in an atmosphere which was polite although not especially cordial. It was as a result of German demands for a radical solution of the Jewish question that the first serious conflict between Hungary and the German Reich occurred.

An ominous change in the German attitude to the Jewish question, an attitude that was radical from the very beginning, was signalled by Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on April 26, 1942. In this he urged the immediate, complete and necessary solution of the Jewish question throughout Europe and, in tones harsher than those he had used hitherto, named the Jews as the number-one enemy of peace and order in Europe. For some months after this speech the Germans made no approach to the Hungarian government on the settling of the Jewish question. Kállay learned of the German intentions only from the reports sent by Sztojay, but did not respond to them. Only on October 14, 1942 did Deputy State Secretary Luther instruct Dietrich von Jagow, Germany's minister in Budapest, to explain to the Hungarian government the reasons which had compelled the Führer to adopt a radical solution to the Jewish question.

According to Luther, the Hungarians were out of step with Germany and other European countries desiring regeneration. Luther therefore demanded the following from the Hungarian government:

1 ■ The Jews to be completely eliminated from cultural and economic life by ongoing legislation.

2 ■ The government's measures to be facilitated and the people enabled to dissociate itself clearly [from the Jews] by the immediate introduction of yellow stars to be worn by all Jews.

3 ■ Preparations to be made for expatriation and transportation of the Jews to the East.[10]

Minister Jagow handed over the German note to Deputy Foreign Minister Ghiczy on October 17. Kállay replied only six weeks later, on December 2, 1942. In his answer, handed over by Sztojay, he rejected, in refined diplomatic language but firmly, the German request for the segregation of the Jews.[11] In early 1943 the Germans repeated their request, but, once again, it was rejected.

The Kállay government's firm stance was praised after the war by Jenő Lévai in his *Fekete könyv* (Black Book) on the tragedy of Hungarian Jewry.[12]

The Jewish question was also discussed during Regent Horthy's visit to Hitler and Ribbentrop at Klessheim on April 16 and 17, 1943. When Horthy rejected German demands for a radical "solution" of the Jewish question and declared that he would not permit the murder or destruction of the Jews, Hitler made it clear that this was not necessary and that they just needed to be placed in concentration camps. Ribbentrop, on the other hand, said that the Jews had to be exterminated. The above statements are highly important, since they belong among the very few sources in which those directing German policy clearly state that by "Final Solution" they meant the physical extermination of the Jews.[13]

Both Horthy and Kállay rejected the German proposals for the "solution" of the Jewish question. And however negatively pre-1989 Hungarian historians attempted to portray the foreign policy of the "Horthy–Kállay régime", one thing they could not hush up, something to which historians in the post-Communist age will hopefully attach appropriate emphasis: German demands concerning the Jewish question produced no effect right up until March 19, 1944. After Horthy's Klessheim visit of April 1943, Hungary was no longer considered a friendly country by the Germans. On May 3, 1943 Ribbentrop instructed Minister Jagow "not to contact Herr Kállay without express instructions to do so, and on no pretext whatever to maintain contact with him socially".[14]

When Hungary remained unyielding over the "solution" to the Jewish question, we can be certain that she was not acting out of opportunistic motives. Kállay rejected the German demands as early as autumn 1942, at a time when the Wehrmacht was still along the Volga and when the defeat of the German

Reich could hardly be predicted with complete certainty. Nor was the decisive role in this issue played by a desire to win the sympathy of the Western powers, since the wartime policy of Britain and the United States did not encourage the belief that the West attached particular importance to saving the Jews. Horthy, Kállay, and a significant part of the Hungarian political élite simply regarded as inhuman the confinement to ghettos and deportation of Hungary's Jews, native or refugees, not to mention what might happen to them later, and Hitler's and Ribbentrop's words at Klessheim in April 1943 allowed them to guess at this more successfully than did any British or American propaganda. In determining this humane policy Miklós Kállay played the decisive role. Had he possessed no other merits, this attitude alone would have assured him of a worthy place in Hungarian and European history.

## The Kállay government's peace feelers in various neutral capitals

On instructions from Prime Minister Miklós Kállay, who up until the end of July 1943 was acting Foreign Minister, exploratory talks first began in Stockholm, between Andor Gellért, press attaché at the Hungarian legation, and Francis Cunningham, secretary at the American legation. As a result of these discussions, Gellért handed the American the Hungarian Foreign Ministry's proposals in November 1942. These consisted of the following three points:

1 ■ If the troops of the Western powers reached the borders of Hungary, the Hungarian armed forces would not resist them.

2 ■ Hungary would not increase co-operation with the Germans and would oppose additional German demands.

3 ■ Hungary would send no more troops to the Soviet front, would gradually bring home the units there, and withdraw them from the battlefield.[15]

The importance of the Stockholm formula lies in the fact that this was the first time the Hungarian government framed the Hungarian position for the purpose of negotiations to be set in motion with the Allies. Cunningham forwarded these proposals to Washington with favourable recommendations, but for many months no reply came from the State Department. The Hungarian government was thus compelled to conduct exploratory talks through other channels. Accordingly, links with the British, too, came to prominence.

Right up to the spring of 1943 contacts with the British were made difficult by the inflexible attitude of the Foreign Office. Since Britain's declaration of war on Hungary in December 1941 (in response to Soviet pressure), every Hungarian approach had received the answer to the effect that as long as Hungary was fighting against Britain's Soviet allies, she could count on neither the sympathy nor the understanding of the British government. This attitude was modified and

moderated on the basis of a memorandum of February 23, 1943 by Frank Roberts (head of the Foreign Office's Central Department) which had an impact on the March 10, 1943 communication Foreign Secretary Eden sent to Secretary of State Hull and Foreign Minister Molotov of the Soviet Union.[16] In this document Eden stressed that Hungary had succeeded in preserving its independence to a greater degree than any of the satellites in southeast Europe. It had a comparatively strong, democratic opposition, the basis on which were the peasant and social democratic parties. There was an opposition of the right as well, one with which Bethlen had links,[17] which was led by nationalists and anti-Germans. Cardinal Serédi, the Prince-Primate, had publicly condemned Nazi ideas. After this Eden listed three conditions which, in his view, Hungary had to observe:

1 ■ The Hungarian government should send no additional reinforcements to the Eastern Front;

2 ■ At the appropriate time the Hungarian government must declare that it will not send troops to the Eastern Front;

3 ■ In the event of an invasion of South-Eastern Europe by the Allies, Hungary would have to announce beforehand that it would not offer resistance and would open its borders to British, American and Polish troops.[18]

Although it praises the role of the Hungarian Churches and the opposition, Eden's communication does not give the impression that Prime Minister Kállay (with Regent Horthy in the background) was behind those endeavours which aimed to bring about a break with Germany.

Kállay's speech to a Government party rally on May 29, 1943 evoked a favourable response from the British. In his address the Prime Minister placed strong emphasis on the European, Christian character of the Hungarian people, and on the independence of Hungarian foreign policy, or, to use his own term, its "autonomy". Making reference to German demands for a radical solution to the Jewish question, he declared that "Hungary would never permit herself, any more than in the past, experiments irreconcilable with her Christian culture and morality, nor deviate from those humane principles which she has practiced throughout her history in racial and denominational questions."[19] This speech provided the guidelines for Hungarian foreign policy right up until the German occupation. For the opposition, István Bethlen, Károly Rassay and Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, among others, expressed their satisfaction.

The Germans did not react to this speech by Kállay. However, it was noticed at the British Foreign Office, where, in a memorandum he drew up for Foreign Secretary Eden, Dennis William Allen of the Central Department stressed that Kállay's chief aim was the preservation of Hungary's national life and independence, and that the Hungarian government regarded a parliamentary system as the main basis for this national life.[20]

As a consequence of these British opinions, secret Anglo-Hungarian negotiations were started which led to what later became known as the Sea of Marmara Agreement. Before discussing this, mention should also be made of the talks conducted in Switzerland by György Barcza, formerly Hungarian minister to London, and György Bakách-Bessenyey, Hungarian minister to Bern, with Van der Heuvel ("Mr. H"), a British diplomat, an American diplomat Royall Tyler and Allen Dulles, head of the American secret service, the OSS (Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the CIA). Barcza represented the Hungarian opposition groups centred around Count Bethlen, while Bakách-Bessenyey negotiated on behalf of the Hungarian government. It may justly be asked why it was necessary to spend months negotiating with the Americans when, at precisely the same time, talks were continuing between British and Hungarian representatives in Istanbul. Kállay explains this, saying that the leading Anglophile circles in Budapest took the view that the Americans viewed certain issues with more sympathy and with less bias than the British, since they were not bound by the Paris Peace Settlement,[21] nor were they tied by the twenty-year alliance with the Soviet Union, concluded in the first half of 1942. It was for this reason that—through Andor Wodianer, its envoy to Lisbon, and with Archduke Otto Habsburg as a go-between—the Hungarian government contacted the Americans, and, through the representative in Lisbon of the Polish government in exile, British diplomats as well. In his memoirs Szegedy-Maszák expresses the opinion that the feelers put out in Istanbul, Berne, Lisbon, and Stockholm had a joint purpose: during the initial period the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, for the purposes of exchanging information, was trying to establish ongoing contacts with persons who were willing to do this, in the hope that sooner or later it could raise matters to the level of policy.[22]

Barcza's and Bakách-Bessenyey's negotiations went on for months, right up until the German occupation, but they brought little in the way of tangible results. The British and American representatives demanded repeatedly that Hungary break with the Germans at the earliest opportunity. This the Hungarian government did not dare to undertake, since it understood full well that such a move would provoke German reprisals, the deportation of the country's political élite, the dispatch to the front of the inadequately equipped armed forces, and, last but not least, the extermination of Hungarian Jewry. The British and American negotiators showed little understanding of these fears on the part of the Hungarians, and the negotiations were basically unsuccessful. The sole tangible result was the arrival by parachute in Hungary of a three-man American mission on March 17, 1944.[23] Although this mission reached Budapest with the help of Hungarian counterintelligence, by then Hungary had been occupied by the Germans.

Material relating to the negotiations by György Barcza and György Bakách-Bessenyey is in the Bakách-Bessenyey papers at the National Archives.

## The Veress mission and the Istanbul agreement. The Lisbon connection

In early 1943 the journalist András Frey, the biochemist Albert Szent Györgyi and other private individuals travelled to Istanbul to establish a link with the British and the Americans. The efforts were in essence unsuccessful. Similarly unsuccessful was László Veress's mission in April 1943. This lack of success stemmed from the fact that the British wished to negotiate with Hungarian representatives on a secret service level, but not on a diplomatic one. The British representative was a member of the SOE, George Pálóczi-Horváth, an emigré Hungarian journalist known for his Communist sympathies. The British position was to cause disappointment in Budapest after Veress's return home, and on Kállay's instructions the negotiations were suspended. In the meantime, as a result of Soviet influence the British position *vis-à-vis* the Hungarians hardened, with the Russians sticking to the Casablanca formula proclaimed by Britain and America in January 1943, according to which the Allies would be willing to negotiate only on the basis of unconditional surrender. It was probably at the suggestion of the Soviets that Eden was persuaded that Hungary's Trianon frontiers with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia should be restored.[24] But W. D. Allen, head of the European Department at the British Foreign Office, was of the opinion that it would be a mistake to force Hungary back behind its Trianon borders. The British position with regard to Hungary was fluid.

Not knowing these details, in late July 1943, after the fall of Mussolini, Kállay and the leadership at the Hungarian Foreign Ministry decided to send László Veress to Istanbul once again, to resume the Anglo-Hungarian contacts broken off in April. Having arrived in Istanbul, by way of the SOE he informed Knatchbull-Hugessen, Britain's ambassador in Ankara, that he wished to negotiate with the British on behalf of a Hungarian group consisting of the Prime Minister, the Interior Minister, the Chief of the General Staff, and the head of the political department at the Foreign Ministry. The subject of the negotiations was to be Hungary's changing sides, which was to take place when the Allies reached the borders of Hungary. It was the diplomat Sterndale Bennett, acting for the ambassador, who negotiated for the British; his negotiating partners were Veress and Dezső Újváry, Hungary's consul-general in Istanbul. After lengthy preliminary discussions, and after taking into account certain Soviet worries, Ambassador Knatchbull-Hugessen and László Veress, meeting on board a ship on the Sea of Marmara on the night of September 9, 1943, agreed on the following:

1 ■ The Hungarian government confirms its previous declaration concerning its capitulation and acceptance of the Allies' conditions.

2 ■ Hungary will keep its capitulation secret and will only make it known when Allied troops reach Hungary's borders.

3 ■ Hungary will gradually reduce its military co-operation with Germany, will withdraw its forces from Russia and will assist Allied aircraft overflying Hungarian territory to attack German military targets.

4 ■ Hungary will gradually scale down its economic co-operation with Germany and will refuse to participate in the production of German war matériel.

5 ■ Hungary commits itself to resist any German attempt to occupy the country. To this end it would reorganize the Hungarian high command to enable the army to break away from the Germans and to attack them.

6 ■ At the given moment Hungary would place all her resources, transport routes and facilities and air bases at the disposal of the Allies for the continuation of the war against Germany.

7 ■ The Allies would, at a suitable time, send a delegation to Hungary by air to take the advance measures necessary for the capitulation.

8 ■ Regular radio contact would be created between the Allies and Hungarian government agencies. The Allies would receive regular information on the German and the Hungarian situation.

9 ■ Hungary commits itself not to establish contact with other official places. [Neither the Hungarian government, nor the Allies adhered to this last condition. A. Cz.]

According to Gyula Juhász, the British ambassador was not present at this agreement, just Sterndale Bennett; according not only to Elizabeth Barker, but also to Laura Veress and Dalma Takács, who drew on László Veress's own account, he was.[26] The present author shares Barker's opinion—namely that László Veress, who had previously negotiated with Sterndale Bennett on many occasions, describes the meeting with the ambassador so graphically that there can be no doubt as to Knatchbull-Hugessen's having been there in person.

In a discussion in early November 1943 between Andor Wodianer, Hungary's envoy to Portugal, and Sir Ronald Campbell, Britain's minister to the same country, Wodianer confirmed Veress's agreement in the name of the Hungarian government. However, the most important condition in this agreement, the arrival of Anglo-American forces on the borders of Hungary, was never met. Nevertheless, the Istanbul agreement was the only agreement the Hungarian government managed to conclude in its efforts to withdraw from the war. In the circumstances of the time, its achievement could be seen as a success.

Here I shall digress briefly to the discussions carried on through the Lisbon channel. Despite the fact that Istanbul was the place where László Veress had concluded with the British ambassador what amounted to a preliminary armistice, Lisbon was the more important conduit, since it was there that most strands came together, including the Polish and the non-OSS American ones;

it was there that the Hungarian government's lengthy and complex exchange of messages with Tibor Eckhardt and Archduke Otto took place. It was there, too, that Francis Deák, an American colonel who was briefly to revive hopes of the West in leading Hungarian circles, appeared in early 1944. Despite this, I shall mention only that, on the basis of Eckhardt's and Archduke Otto's messages, it seemed for a time that President Roosevelt and the American leadership were endeavouring to set up some kind of Danubian Confederation and to assign a leading role in it to Archduke Otto. (Tibor Eckhardt, a founding member of the Independent Smallholders' Party, had been sent to America by the government.) Correspondence on this can be found in the Hungarian National Archives, among the Bakách-Bessenyei papers there and Emil Csonka's book on Archduke Otto contains much interesting information.[27] Here I shall refer merely to President Roosevelt's conversation with the Empress Zita on September 11, 1943, and his conversation a few days later with Cardinal Spellmann. In the presence of the Dowager Empress, Roosevelt stated emphatically that of all European countries he liked Hungary the most, strongly criticized Trianon, and opined that Transylvania should belong to Hungary. He added, however, that all this would need to be achieved in agreement with the Russians, because America was not strong enough not to be friends with the Russians.[28]

To Cardinal-Archbishop Spellmann of New York, a few days later, the President spoke very differently. Roosevelt openly stated that Austria, Hungary and Croatia would, in some form or another, be Russian protectorates. He added that in Austria a Communist regime would come to power after the war, and that this could only be prevented by Archduke Otto's managing to secure the Austrian throne with Hungarian help. But Otto would have to proceed in agreement with the Russians.[29]

The link established by Wodianer with the British by way of Polish exiles and the correspondence, through Lisbon, with Tibor Eckhardt and Archduke Otto, may be regarded as events in Hungarian wartime foreign policy that aroused a justifiable hope in Budapest that there was perhaps another possibility for Hungary besides unconditional surrender and acceptance of the Casablanca formula. With regard to this there were numerous British and American references to indicate that Britain and America would not allow Central Europe to be taken over by the Russians. Solberg, the American Chargé d'Affaires, announced officially that with regard to Central and Eastern Europe, General Eisenhower alone was competent and authorized to negotiate.[30] This encouraged the hope that there were British and American diplomatic circles which did not subscribe to the inflexible SOE and OSS line and which were attempting to mould a Central Europe of a more conservative kind. Kállay and those at the top of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry hoped that the victorious allies would recognize that lasting peace and order in the Central European region after the war could be ensured not through agreement with the so-called "forces of revolution", but with

individual governments. Looking back, this was an illusion, but at the time many hoped that Hungary could emerge from the world war with its strength, political system, constitutional order, and parliamentary form of government intact.

## Reasons for the failure of the Kállay government's foreign policy

What were the real causes of the failure of the negotiations with the British and the Americans?

The reasons for the lack of success are to be sought first and foremost in the irreconcilability of the Hungarian and Anglo-American aims. Kállay and the political stratum which supported him, one which extended from the conservative wing of the Government party all the way to the Social Democrats, hoped that after the war the Allies would appreciate the fact that together with Finland, another Axis ally, Hungary had preserved not only its Christian, humanist traditions, but also its parliamentary form of government, along with the freedoms of the press, opinion and association. Contributing to this was the belief, which afterwards proved illusory, that the Allies, learning from the experiences of the non-workable peace settlement which followed the First World War, would try to create stable conditions in the Central European region. This illusion sustained not only Kállay, Bethlen and the leading conservative circles, but also the radical opposition leader Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky.

Hungary's political élite did not recognize that a huge gulf existed between Hungary's war aims and those of the British and Americans. While the main goal of the Hungarian government was to save Hungary's constitutional and parliamentary system for the postwar period, the sole aim of the British and American leaders was the complete defeat of Hitler and Germany, and the destruction of the German military machine for all time. The old British policy of preserving the balance of power in Europe was, during the Second World War, already a thing of the past. Despite Chamberlain's statement in October 1939, Anglo-American propaganda did not distinguish between the Nazis and the German people. Overtures by the anti-Hitler opposition were firmly rejected by British and American leaders, the most important document of this rejection being the Casablanca declaration of January 24, 1943 which insisted on unconditional surrender. Hans Rothfels, a German Jewish historian who emigrated to the United States, has correctly remarked that "the Allies fell victim to their own propaganda as much as the Nazis did, and it is an irony of history that despite their intentions, they worked hand in hand with Hitler for the annihilation of the German people".[31] The best evidence for this thesis is provided by *The New York Herald Tribune,* when it wrote after the failure of the plot against Hitler on July 20, 1944 that Americans were not sorry that the bomb did not kill Hitler, since a successful coup would have robbed them of more American victories.[32] This article, quoted by Rothfels, indicates the extent of the callousness the war produced even in the democratic camp.

In this atmosphere the preservation of Hungary's constitutional structure and its humane policy towards the Jews could not play a role in the Allies' war strategy. The leading Allied politicians and generals were guided by a single viewpoint: who could contribute to Hitler's defeat and to what extent? This was why the British and Americans were always urging Hungary to turn against the Germans openly, a move which, though doomed to failure, would for a few days have provided headlines in British and American papers.

Despite the fact that Secretary of Legation László Veress concluded a concrete preliminary armistice agreement with Knachbull-Hugessen, the British Ambassador, in September 1943, more or less up until the German occupation, leading liberal-conservative circles in Hungary placed their hopes in America, mainly on account of the consistent and seemingly principled policy that President Roosevelt had pursued during the first years of the war. Were there real grounds for these hopes, or was it all simply wishful thinking?

It is difficult to answer with a simple yes or no. Roosevelt was an idealist adhering to Wilsonian principles, but he was also a power politician whose thinking was often almost Machiavellian. In addition, he had to take into account American public opinion. Because of the pact with Hitler in August 1939, most Americans were for a long time mistrustful of the Soviet Union. After Hitler's attack on it on June 22, 1941, and especially after the great Soviet victories later on, this mistrust gave way to a genuine pro-Soviet euphoria. The strongly left-wing (in American parlance "liberal") press constantly proclaimed the heroism of the Soviet people fighting alone against the Germans. News agencies under Soviet influence possessed huge funds, and branded papers trying to warn public opinion about Soviet expansionist plans as "fascist" or "pro-Nazi". According to Ciechanowski, the Polish minister in Washington, Soviet propaganda and Soviet infiltration became an enduring phenomenon in the American press from late 1942 onwards.[33] Stalin, who had ordered the extermination of millions of Ukrainian peasants, was benevolently restyled "Uncle Joe".

Of course, there were far-sighted persons in the American élite such as Sumner Welles, John F. Kennan and William C. Bullitt, who viewed this pro-Soviet mood with concern. During the course of 1943 Bullitt, who had served as ambassador in Moscow and then in Paris, warned the President in a number of letters about the dangers of Soviet expansionism and Soviet ambitions for a world Communist revolution. He pointed out not only that the Soviet government had annexed territories on the basis of the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact (the Baltic States, eastern Poland, Bessarabia, etc.), but also that it would try to annex Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, that with Beneš's help it would try to create a satellite state out of Czechoslovakia, and that it wanted governments in France and Italy after the war that would be under Communist influence. As Bullitt saw it, the best way to obviate this danger was for British and American forces to conquer Europe before the Russians, who were still fighting along the

Volga, could do so. It would be an illusion to believe that this goal will be achieved by landings in France, wrote Bullitt, who went on to propose that after the recruitment of Turkey, Axis power should be broken by way of the Balkans; Poland should be liberated by crossing Hungary and Romania, and in this way prevented from becoming a Soviet satellite. (This plan accorded with Churchill's thinking and that of Sir Alan Brooke, chief of the British general staff.)[34]

Bullitt's repeated warnings remained cries in the wilderness. The President reacted to his memoranda saying that Stalin was working purely for the security of his own country. If America gave him what he wanted and didn't ask anything from him in return, then out of a sense of obligation he would not try to annex other countries.[35]

Roosevelt's foreign policy should be discussed in detail, a policy motivated by personal feelings. On account of Britain's progressive exhaustion during the last two years of the war, Roosevelt, as the leader of the world's strongest military power, played a decisive role not only in authorizing the course the war was to take, but also in shaping the postwar order.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the thirty-second President of the United States, was not naive, as legend has it, nor, as his detractors proclaimed after the war, did he sell out Central and Eastern Europe to the Russians. According to John Lukacs, he was a plain-speaking American patrician who did not like complex problems and who tried to avoid lengthy negotiations. He believed in the magic of personal encounters, and thus thought that he could work this magic on any foreign statesman with whom he was negotiating.[36]

His world-view was one-sided: it was "liberal" and progressive. The gist of the American "liberal" world-view was an unconditional belief in progress: the standard-bearer of this was the United States. Stalin's cruel purges and his extermination of millions of kulaks were condemned at the time; as a result of Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union he became an ally of the West, the mass-murders were forgotten, since after the outbreak of war Stalin appealed to Russian national feeling and reopened the churches that the Bolsheviks had closed. The conclusion was drawn, from this and from the dissolution of the Comintern, that the Russian dictator was no longer striving for world revolution nor world conquest, but that he was leading Russia towards some kind of distinctively Russian "New Deal".

In the first months after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, Roosevelt and Churchill started out with the assumption that Russia would emerge weakened from the Second World War, and thus the Pax Americana proclaimed in the Atlantic Charter would determine the new postwar world-order. This view was modified by the Soviet victory at Stalingrad and during the campaigns that followed. This change can only be partly attributed to the pro-Soviet, progressive mood in America. The other decisive factor was the new strategic concept worked out at the so-called Trident conference held by the British and Americans in Washington in May 1943. At this conference, the Mediterranean

strategy proposed by Churchill, Bullitt and Britain's Chief of Staff Sir Alan Brooke was finally rejected and all available British and American forces were held in reserve for the cross-Channel invasion, the Normandy landings.[37] General Eisenhower, the commander of the American forces in the Mediterranean, and Robert Murphy, a diplomat assisting him, continued to consider a Balkan landing useful, but the President and the American high command blocked the implementation of this Mediterranean strategy.[38] As a result of this change, Roosevelt gave up his plan for a global Pax Americana. In its stead the theory of the "four policemen" was born, according to which world peace would in the future be kept by America, the Soviet Union, Britain, and China. Among these the President—as can also be seen from a letter he wrote to Bullitt—strove mainly for agreement with Stalin. He was still convinced that he was the only man who could negotiate with the Russian dictator.[39] In this he was probably influenced by a memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff dated August 10, 1943 which made it clear in no uncertain terms that after the war Russia would be the only real power in Europe and, consequently, every assistance had to be given to her and everything pledged to keep her friendship. Since Russia would enjoy hegemony in Europe after the defeat of the Axis, it was important for America to maintain friendly relations with her.[40] Accordingly, Roosevelt came to an agreement with Stalin (leaving out Churchill), and then decided in favour of landings in the south of France and against landings in the Balkans.[41]

Roosevelt's conviction was based on a misjudgment of the situation, according to which Stalin was not an imperialist, although his annexation of the Baltic States, which occurred with Hitler's help, was a deed more brutal than the German conquest of them. The President also considered Churchill a typical figure of nineteenth-century British colonialism and imperialism, and made fun of him in Stalin's presence. The future, according to him, was a Russia no longer revolutionary but democratic; Churchill's Britain, however, represented a vanished era.

After all this one can say that hopes among Hungary's leading political stratum that America's "more conservative" foreign policy would make her more sympathetic towards a conservative, but parliamentary Hungary than would be the British Labour Party, Beneš's Czechoslovak government in exile, and a Britain under the influence of Mihály Károlyi's group. This was based on a complete misjudgment of the situation and of Roosevelt's intentions. If Roosevelt was prepared to sacrifice Poland, an ally, to win Stalin's goodwill, then he was still more willing to sacrifice Hungary, an official member of the Axis camp. Of course, it would be an oversimplification to allege that at Teheran and Yalta Roosevelt betrayed or handed over the states of Central and Eastern Europe to Soviet Bolshevism. Roosevelt, who disregarded the realistic counsel of the Kremlinologists Bullitt and George F. Kennan and who listened to the pro-Soviet Harry Hopkins and other "liberal" advisors, was convinced that Soviet influence would not mean the Bolshevizing of East-Central Europe. He imagined Soviet

influence as being somewhat akin to United States influence in Guatamala or the banana republics of Central America. He was convinced that the Soviet Union would slowly move towards democracy. Although Churchill judged the objectives of Soviet foreign policy more realistically, Anthony Eden, who directed British foreign policy until almost the end of the war, was convinced that Stalin aimed at sincere co-operation with the Western powers.[42]

From these authoritative British and American manifestations it emerges plainly the Kállay government's hopes for Hungary, with British and American help, to avoid Soviet occupation and dominion were an illusion. Although there were sober thinkers, such as W. D. Allen, George F. Kennan, or William C. Bullitt, who all saw the Soviet danger as clearly as the leading Hungarian politicians did, those who took the decisions and especially Roosevelt, had a single goal in view and that was to defeat Hitler as soon as possible. They nourished illusions as to Soviet ambitions and were convinced that under Stalin's leadership the Soviet Union would slowly dismantle dictatorship and in time would turn itself into a democracy. It is possible that in the case of many of them this was just self-deception or a salve to their consciences, but analysis of this is a task for psychologists, not historians. Miklós Kállay, as his memoirs attest, considered that hidden antagonisms between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Americans would sharpen as the war went on, and that it would therefore be in British and American interests to prevent the Soviet Union's penetration into the Carpathian Basin. In the short term he was mistaken, but in the longer one he saw events realistically. Two years after the end of the struggle against Hitler the Cold War began, caused by the Soviet Union's policy of force in Central and Eastern Europe, but this was of no help in Hungary, since the wartime events had led to Hungary already belonging not to the Atlantic but to the Soviet camp.

Miklós Kállay's main endeavour, to preserve Hungary's independence, was unsuccessful. He was able to avert neither the German occupation nor the country's coming under Soviet sway. Despite this, Kállay's self-sacrificing, heroic efforts to save Hungary for the Christian, freedom-loving West deserve to be recognized by posterity. ❧

## NOTES

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Miklós Lojkó

# The Failed Handshake over the Danube

## The Story of Anglo-American Involvement in the Liberation of Central Europe at the End of the Second World War

Throughout the years of the ideological isolation of Eastern Europe, a shroud of mystery hung over the details of Anglo-American designs for the liberation of the lands of Central and South-East Europe during the Second World War. With the hindsight of the consequences of the post-war division of Europe, a sense of guilt has grown in the West, and, in turn, a sense of having been betrayed has developed in the East. In the light of old controversies and material that has become available since the fall of Communism, two questions may be asked in this connection:

*(a)* Was there a genuine desire among British and American political and military leaders after 1942 to stage major campaigns in the Eastern Mediterranean region as a possible continuation of the operations in Italy, or were hints to this effect only part of a ploy to divert German divisions from the vital battlegrounds of Normandy? And *(b)*, Was such a venture feasible in the contemporary military and political situation? This brief study offers the outlines of an inquiry into these elusive questions.

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In 1942/43, operations code-named "Torch" (the Allied invasion of French North Africa) and "Husky" (the subsequent landings in Sicily) were implemented as the only means for the Western allies to engage the Axis in active fighting. At the same time, they also served as rehearsals for the decisive invasion of Normandy in mid-1944. The two operations, however, evolved from an earlier British plan, conceived before the Soviet and American entry into the war. Furthermore, as the various strands of the North African and Italian campaigns developed, a new, clandestine, function came to be associated with them as well. The latter aspect came to light only recently since documents relating to strategic deception have been released for public scrutiny in the archives, or published in the *British Intelligence in the Second World War* series.[1]

Before the Soviet and American entry into the war, British strategic thinking concentrated on survival rather than on the means of actually winning. As far as there was a strategy, it consisted of a somewhat far-fetched, but not inconceivable, theory that the German Reich would eventually be brought down by mass uprisings in occupied Europe, instigated and assisted by the British. Such a plan re-

quired a prolonged war of attrition, resulting in the depletion of the enemy's resources, and a build-up of British resources, and those of the Resistance in Europe. Large-scale air attacks, and the creation of an ever tightening ring around the Continent were envisaged. The centre of gravity of any military activity would also, of necessity, have to be the peripheries, rather than the hub, of the new German Empire. It was essential to construct an elaborate and sophisticated intelligence gathering network, a web of agents who would "set Europe ablaze", to compensate for British lack of matériel. As one of his last acts in public office on 19 July 1940, Neville Chamberlain signed a secret paper authorising that "a new organisation shall be established forthwith to co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against the enemy overseas. [...] This organisation will be known as the Special Operations Executive."[2]

A Mediterranean strategy, based on existing facilities in the Levant, and focusing on the Balkans, did not emerge only because British possibilities were limited. It made positive strategic sense as well. The loss of Romanian oil would have caused irreparable damage to the Germans; the eastern Mediterranean, the route to the oil installations of the Persian Gulf, was a traditional British sphere of interest, and the British also had equipment in place in the Middle East. The fact that the area was held down by Italy, the junior partner in the Axis, made operations seem all the more practicable. Finally, strong partisan activity, in Greece and Yugoslavia, provided the British with some of their earliest Continental allies. The fact, however, that the British were ignominiously ejected from Crete in May 1941 by the Germans was a portent of the difficulties that lay ahead.

It is arguable that a strategy based on the eastern Mediterranean alone could never have won the war against Germany, and that the German attack on Russia was inevitable, and consequently any Russian counter-offensive would have clashed with British activity aimed at establishing, or maintaining, a sphere of influence in the Near East. However, these considerations did not arise at this stage of the conflict. With *Festung Europa* an accomplished fact, the future was inscrutable. For a considerable period following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Russians did not appear to be able resist the onslaught. At this time "[a victorious counter-attack] was not the role for which the Russian Army was cast in the calculations of the British Chiefs of Staff".[3]

With the American entry into the war, a Joint Chiefs of Staff was established, and American strategic planning, commensurate with their material input into the war effort, gradually began to carry more weight than that of the British. From as early as December 1941, the time of the first Washington Conference, the plan of a north-western assault on the heart of Europe enjoyed primacy among Allied strategies. "Bolero" and "Round-up", as the build-up of troops and equipment in the United Kingdom and the planned landing operations were initially code-named, took precedence over all other commitments. If the Far East temporarily became a subsidiary theatre, the Balkans, with its, for the Americans, frightening connotations of a Byzantine quagmire, became even more subsidiary. The principle was not "un-European". Engaging the enemy at the decisive point with decisive force was an old Clausewitzian approach to war. Gradually the British Chiefs of Staff and Churchill himself came round to accepting the new plan, not least because it seemed to serve as a guarantee of American adherence to the "Germany first" principle. By the time of the Teheran Conference in December

1943, no-one openly dissented from this strategy. In addition, the fact that Roosevelt and George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the US Army, argued (like Stalin) for providing, as soon as possible, effective relief for the Russians by opening a second front in Western Europe, and that they, among other American leaders, shared a propensity to suspect the British Mediterranean strategy of not being entirely disinterested, of being part of some imperial design, lay heavily in favour of an exclusively north-west European strategy. Churchill's known preference for a southern European solution also created the impression that he hoped to put right, as it were, his failure at the Dardanelles during the First World War. Now, as then, he spoke of attacking the "soft underbelly" of Europe. The attachment of the British to action in the eastern Mediterranean died hard.

An Allied amphibious attack on north-west Europe turned out to be logistically impossible in 1942. Ironically, it was American eagerness to engage the Axis in 1942 which gave the impetus to reviving the old British plans for a landing in French North Africa, Operation "Gymnast", (subsequently renamed "Torch"). At Casablanca, in December 1942, Churchill and Roosevelt discussed the logical sequel to the North African Allied advance, that is, plans for landing on the island of Sicily. Beyond that, however, they did not attempt to formulate policy. Only after spectacular success in Sicily was it decided that the Allies should press on to knock Italy out of the Axis. It was in the course of the execution of this opportunistic strategy in late 1942 and in 1943 that the appetite of Churchill, Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Henry Maitland Wilson, Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East in 1943, Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean in 1944, and of General Sir Harold Alexander, Commander-in-Chief of the 8th Army, Supreme Allied Commander in Italy, came to shift the emphasis onto the Mediterranean theatre to a larger extent than it had been agreed upon by the Combined Chiefs. Though hard fought, the campaign in Italy bore fruit. Mussolini was dismissed by the King of Italy a fortnight after the landings in Sicily. Encouraged by these events, Churchill argued that "The flank attack may become the main attack, and the main attack a holding operation in the early stages. Our second front will, in fact, comprise both the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of Europe, and we can push either right-handed, left-handed, or both handed as our resources and circumstances permit."[4] On 26 October, one month before the Teheran Conference, he wrote to President Roosevelt: "We must not let this great Italian battle degenerate into a deadlock. At all costs we must win Rome and the airfields to the north of it. [...] I feel that Eisenhower and Alexander must have what they need to win the battle in Italy, no matter what effect is produced on subsequent operations."[5] Churchill's *confidant,* Field Marshal Smuts, and King George VI also shared the enthusiasm for this strategy. Smuts hoped "to go on fighting" in the Mediterranean "and not switch over to a new front like 'Overlord' ". The King wrote to Churchill in October 1943:

> I have always thought that your original idea of last year of attacking the "underbelly" of the Axis was the right one [...] The present situation as we know has turned out even better than we could have ever hoped [...] we command the Mediterranean Sea [...] Italy is at war with our enemy Germany; Roumania & Hungary are trying to get in touch with us. [...] may be we shall see the 3 great powers, Great Britain, USA & USSR fighting together on the same front!![6]

Keeping the Eastern Mediterranean operations as the single line of attack was

not a realistic or expedient strategy. However, it later became clear that the resources for pursuing Churchill's vision of two second fronts would never be adequate either, even though, through the activities of the secret deception unit, "A" Force, the Germans were led to believe and fear the opposite.

At the third Washington Conference, held in May 1943, the British delegation proposed to press ahead to exploit the achievements of the Italian campaign by landings eastward on the Balkans, rather than transferring these troops to the UK. It was argued that from the newly occupied bases the Allies could reach previously inaccessible parts of Central and South-Eastern Europe. If the Germans reacted strongly, so much the better, as this would also keep large numbers of their forces pinned down, away from both North-Western Europe and the Russian front. In July 1943, Churchill spoke to the Chiefs of Staff Committee about a "post-Husky" strategy, which had the River Po, or Vienna, among its possible aims, even to the detriment of "Overlord". The Americans were not impressed. Correctly they argued that the British proposals contradicted previous agreements. At Teheran, still wishing to retain the Balkans option, Churchill supported the primacy of the build-up for a North-Western attack, and accepted a definite plan for an invasion of Southern France in the wake of the advance in Italy, believing that landing craft would also become available for a move into the Balkans. This, however, never had the chance to become significantly more than theoretical as the operations bogged down on the Pisa–Rimini Line, and did not move much further north until the spring of 1945, by which time Soviet forces had come to dominate the Balkans and Central Europe, with the exception of Greece, in adherence to the terms of the Churchill-Stalin "percentage agreement".[7]

From the summer of 1944, Churchill began to see the Soviet advance as a threat, rather than as a relief. Backed by General Alexander, he renewed his plea for a diversion to the east, especially as an alternative to "Anvil", landings in the south of France, originally planned to coincide with, and provide dynamic diversionary assistance to, the D-Day operations. Plans for an Adriatic alternative were put forward on 7 June 1944 by General Alexander. Describing his plans to a meeting of the British War Cabinet on 7 July, he said they represented a chance for "the historical entry into Europe".[8] In his memoirs he wrote: "Once through the so-called Ljubljana Gap the way led to Vienna, an object of great political and psychological value."[9] This time, however, even the British chiefs were opposed to the idea. More significantly, American denial of logistic support sealed the fate of the inchoate plans. Even though "Anvil" was not carried out, the operations through the Rhône Valley, renamed as "Dragoon", only started in August 1944 and were therefore too late to assist in the initial days of "Overlord",[10] the Americans were adamant that their landing craft, essential for any amphibious operation across the Adriatic, could only be used in "Dragoon", and not in an, in their view, strategically and politically dubious diversion to the east. Churchill's support for a move to the east stemmed from political considerations which were no longer consistent with his pledges made in the percentage agreement. The Prime Minister and his commander had to yield to the majority opinion, both American and British, arrayed against them.

The story is not complete without yet another addition to our knowledge of wartime Allied diplomacy. In sharp contrast to what had been the standard think-

ing until the mid-nineties about British-American-Soviet co-operation and joint planning, British and American sources recently made accessible reveal that, by the late autumn of 1944, East–West relations had undergone a temporary improvement. This atmosphere is likely to have been created so that Stalin could approach the Western powers to seek the further easing of the burdens on the Russian front. It was at this time, in mid-December 1944, that the Soviet leader

> even suggested to the U.S. ambassador [Averell Harriman] that the West should land forces on the Dalmatian coast (Churchill's favorite invasion prospect in his dream of attacking the soft underbelly of Europe) so that they could drive north to clasp hands with their Russian ally in Vienna, or perhaps even Budapest.[11]

However, even if, for some reason, the Americans could have been brought around to support the strategy, their commitment would have been short-lived. Western commanders became uncomfortably aware of the limitations of their overall capacity when Hitler's so-called "Bulge" offensive halted their advance through the Ardennes, also in mid-December. This time, it was the British and American officials who appealed to Stalin to bring forward his spring offensive to take the German pressure off the Western troops. Though the American and British forces eventually were the victors of the Battle of the Bulge, Stalin also advanced the date of the Soviet spring offensive to mid-January, which drew significant numbers of German units to the Eastern Front.

However, the greatest flaw in the plan was that Alexander, its only senior military advocate, never really explored its logistic feasibility. It envisaged the crossing, in a short space of time, of very difficult and hostile terrain, much of which had been killing fields in the First World War. The vistas opened up were enticing indeed: the Danube, rather than the Elbe, could have been the line on which the Western and Eastern Allies finally met, which would certainly have made a difference to the distribution of power on the Continent after the war. But the Ljubljana Gap, the valley of the Save, and the Klagenfurt Valley, *en route* to Vienna, would have held unpleasant surprises in store for a war-weary British 8th Army. The "underbelly" may not have been so soft after all. Although the plans were never put to the test, it is highly doubtful that they could have been executed within the time frame available, given the fact that both the Yugoslav partisans and the Russian armies, partly due to Western prodding, were progressing speedily in a similar direction. In any case, the opportunity was lost after "Dragoon" had been staged and Soviet forces had advanced through Romania, Hungary, and parts of Yugoslavia from August 1944 to April 1945. At the same time, it is important to point out, especially in the context of the ensuing Cold War, that the original British pressure for a Mediterranean strategy was meant to counter American opposition to the "Europe First" principle, and that its continued exploitation served to give immediate succour to the Soviet war effort, rather than to forestall it. Its last minute transformation to serve the latter purpose was not a viable alternative, either strategically or politically, at the time.

In the foregoing I have discussed the points raised in my original questions, except for the aspect of secret intelligence, which, I believe, needs to be discussed separately.

The hidden side of the Mediterranean strategy was strategic deception. In March 1941 "Advanced HQ 'A' Force" was established under a British officer, Lieut Col

Dudley Clarke. As part of the "Double-Cross System", this British intelligence network of agents, double agents and their controllers, "A" Force was originally a "notional" Brigade of the Special Air Service, itself also initially a notional body. Having become the centre for strategic deception in the Middle East, and then in the whole Mediterranean area, its task was to create and keep in service notional, i.e. imaginary, agents, military formations, sometimes whole divisions, threats, intended to mislead and disadvantage the enemy in that theatre, especially in preparation for particular planned real operations. Though largely independent in choosing its methods, this "rumour factory", as Sir Michael Howard has called it, worked under the loose supervision of an organisation called the London Controlling Section. The main headquarters of "A" Force was in Cairo and served, for most of the story covered above, to provide camouflage for factual operations under the command of General Alexander.

The notional operation code-named "Barclay" helped to secure the success of "Husky" by pinning down large numbers of German troops through implanting the idea of an impending Allied attack on the Balkans via Greece in the early summer of 1943. The most successful of all bogus operations, code-named "Mincemeat", designed to confuse the Germans about future Allied operations, resulted in the German penetration of the Balkans in March-July 1943. "Zeppelin", among other objectives, carried a notional plan to attack Istria and the Dalmatian coast by a US contingent in early 1944. "The strategic task laid down for "A" Force under the overall plan, *Zeppelin,* was to keep German reserves away from the Normandy battlefields until D + 25; that is, until the beginning of July."[12] "Turpitude" comprised notional attacks on Salonica and Varna with Russian participation in June 1944. Another very successful bogus operation, "Ferdinand", promoted in August 1944, at the time of the genuine Operation "Dragoon", practically concurred with the unrealistic strategy campaigned for by Churchill and Alexander at the time to concentrate on Italy and achieve an eastward diversion later. All these imaginary plans implied action in the Eastern Mediterranean, and were ultimately designed to assist "Overlord". The Germans proved to be remarkably susceptible to them. By the spring of 1944 the impression was created in some German intelligence analysts that plans for an Allied north-western attack were abandoned altogether for an assault on Dalmatia or Southern France. Accurate reports of the unfeasibility of a Balkan strategy were drowned out by the "intelligence noise". By the time the credibility of any Eastern Mediterranean strategy to be pursued by the Western Allies diminished, the Soviets appeared on the horizon after a successful drive across the Ukraine, drawing ever more German formations away from the West. On 19 March 1944, in order to protect their lines of communication, the Germans occupied Hungary, their ally, and on 15 October, by staging a fascist coup, destroyed the remnants of constitutional government there. By this time, with its aims accomplished, "A" Force began to close down shop. The illusions of an "Anglo-Saxon" landing also vanished, both amongst the retreating Germans, and amongst the liberal opposition in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Strategic deception is a cool and effective device. As the details of its role in the Mediterranean in 1942–44 began to emerge in the 1980s, Gyula Juhász, renowned Hungarian expert on European diplomacy during the Second World War, expressed his bitterness about its cold logic.[13] Hungary's precarious participation in the Hitler alliance was a disaster from the

start. Soon after the very heavy losses sustained by the Hungarian 2nd Army on the southern Russian front in 1942, the Prime Minister, Miklós Kállay, supported by the more liberal elements of the political spectrum, introduced policies which were meant to steer the country out of the German clasp. Prominent among such policies were circumventing German demands for the deportation of Hungary's Jews by assigning them to work units assisting the Hungarian army, and sending peace feelers to neutral capitals to negotiate terms for a possible surrender. The negotiators, and through them the Hungarian government, were lulled into believing in the existence of an active Allied policy in South-Eastern Europe, and the misconception that they only needed to bide their time, and change sides when the Western Allies came near to Hungary's borders. For historical and political reasons, until the very last moment, the Hungarians, like the Polish and unlike the Czechoslovak governments-in-exile, were very reluctant to negotiate with the Russians. Therefore it is not an exaggeration to say that from early 1943 till October 1944, the whole of Hungarian policy hinged on the expectation that Western troops would appear near Hungary's borders, and the country might safely withdraw from the war, or change sides. What happened instead was that, partly due to the danger posed by the advancing Russians, but also because of fears of a Western offensive across the northern Balkans, engendered in the German leadership through Allied deception. Hungary, whose wavering leadership was no longer trusted in Berlin, was occupied by the Nazis, its "autocratic-liberal" administration was removed, and 600,000 of its citizens were deported to face death or untold suffering. The validity of the policy to provide all possible buttress to "Overlord" cannot be questioned. It is evident that the victims of 1944/45 in Hungary were the victims of the Nazis, and not of the Allies. At the same time, acquaintance with ancillary parts of the western strategy, such as the above, enriches our understanding of the global conduct of the war, and the way it affected a particular microcosm, like that of Hungary, at the end of the war.

It is therefore possible to argue that *a)*, although there was a short-lived desire at the highest level among British leaders for military involvement in liberating parts of Central Europe and the Balkans, no agreement could be reached for its execution; and *b)*, that the above was the result of American reluctance to be associated with such a project, and that the plans were most probably logistically unfeasible in the available time frame. The role of deception in this story has not yet been sufficiently analysed. Nonetheless, it may be observed that many authors who have dealt with the subject have, in my view, failed to draw a firm line between deliberate deception by notional threats, and the fact that certain actors in the service of the Axis powers were deceived as a result of receiving information on factual plans subsequently not carried out, or as a result of factual operations, some of which may in fact have been intended as ruses. The overall strategy benefited from all three. As I pointed out earlier, in this war of both nerves and *matériel,* these phenomena may have temporarily come very close, in the field, or in the minds of the authors of strategy. However, I believe that in resolving the questions I put at the beginning, it is important to keep them apart. By realising that the decisive majority of plans relating to the Eastern Mediterranean only existed in the realm of fantasy, i.e. as part of deception, one can understand how little chance they ever had of becoming an alternative to the strategy which was actually pursued by the Western Allies. ❧

# NOTES

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2 ■ M.R.D. Foot: *SOE in France,* London, 1968, pp. 8–9, as quoted in M.R.D. Foot, "Was SOE Any Good?", *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 16 (1981), pp. 167–81.

3 ■ Michael Howard: *The Mediterranean Strategy in the Second World War,* London, 1968, pp. 15–16.

4 ■ J.M. Gwyer and J.R.M. Butler: *Grand Strategy,* vol. III, London, 1964, pp. 637–8, quoted in M. Howard, *The Mediterranean Strategy,* p. 34.

5 ■ Winston S. Churchill: *The Second World War,* vol. V, p. 220, quoted in M. Howard, *The Mediterranean Strategy,* p. 56.

6 ■ Martin Gilbert: *Road to Victory, Winston Churchill 1941–45,* vol VII of The Churchill Biography, London, 1986, quoting Churchill Papers 20/92.

7 ■ In a notorious agreement, also referred to as the "naughty document", reached in Moscow in October 1944, Churchill and Stalin divided Central and South-Eastern Europe into Russian and British-American spheres of interest in which the future influence of the two sides in the individual countries were expressed in percentages. E.g. Romania was deemed to come under 90 per cent Soviet influence and 10 per cent western, Greece 90 per cent Western and 10 per cent Soviet control. Influence in Hungary was supposed to be shared 50-50 per cent.

8 ■ David Hunt: "British Military Planning and Aims in 1944", in William Deakin, Elisabeth Barker, Jonathan Chadwick, eds., *British Political and Military Strategy in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe in 1944,* London, 1988, p. 14, quoting from PRO CAB 65/47.

9 ■ Field Marshal Earl Alexander of Tunis: *The Alexander Memoirs 1940–45,* London, 1962, p. 138, quoted in Michael Howard: *The Mediterranean Strategy,* p. 62.

10 ■ The lateness of "Dragoon" was, however, partially compensated by the spreading of the false rumours of an attack in the region to coincide with "Overlord", known to its creators in "A" Force as Operation "Vendetta".

11 ■ Bradley F. Smith: *Sharing Secrets with Stalin, How the Allies Traded Intelligence, 1941–1945,* University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 1996, p. 230.

12 ■ Michael Howard: *British Intelligence in the Second World War,* vol. V, *Strategic Deception,* London, 1990, p. 148.

13 ■ Juhász expounded his views on this subject in his Inaugural Lecture at the Hungarian Academy, subsequently published as *A háború és Magyarország: 1938–1945* (The War and Hungary: 1938–1945), Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1986.

Miklós Györffy

# Everything and Nothing

Péter Esterházy: *Harmonia Caelestis.* Budapest, Magvető, 2000, 711 pp.

The publication of Péter Esterházy's new novel *Harmonia Caelestis* almost coincided with his fiftieth birthday. In many respects this new work presents the reader with a new Esterházy. He may have thought it important to celebrate the round half-century with this very novel and start, as it were, a new literary life—or, rather, to symbolically crown the first half of his life and career with this work. It could be said that this work crowns the Esterházy in him, returning to himself all the Esterházy-ness that was taken from his ancestors—princes, and counts, on whose coats-of-arms are displayed crowns—and from himself.

Péter Esterházy comes from one of the wealthiest and most powerful Hungarian aristocratic families, a fact known to everyone in Hungary, even those who have never read a single line written by him. Traceable back to the twelfth century, from the seventeenth century the Eszterházys were among the richest landowners and held the highest Imperial and Royal, or ecclesiastical offices. The three volumes of the Hungarian Dictionary of Biography—published even in Socialist times, which were not in the least enthusiastic about the aristocracy—have sixteen Esterházy entries, (not including the novelist). The history of the Esterházy family runs in conjunction, to a certain extent, with that of Hungary and with that of the Habsburg Empire. This parallel may be drawn as the Esterházys possessed lands almost everywhere in the kingdom during the last four centuries, and were leading figures in historical events. Before long the branch of the family bearing the title of count, through various descendants, had become related by marriage to innumerable other aristocratic families, and this web of connections spread throughout Europe. One of the Esterházy lines rose to princely rank, and for two and a half centuries they were the biggest Hungarian landed proprietors. My Dear Father," writes the author-descendant (in the novel all his ancestors are addressed or described thus)

> was one of the most versatile characters in seventeenth-century Hungarian history and art. At the peak of his political career he was awarded the title of Palatine and the rank of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. He turned the mansion at Kismarton into a luxurious residence, had numerous churches built and employed painters and sculptors in his stately homes. In 1711 his collection of hymns *Harmonia caelestis* was published in Vienna, and Hungarian musical history has recorded him as an outstanding composer too.

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***Miklós Györffy***
*reviews new fiction for this journal.*

Although more recent research has shown Prince Pál Esterházy to be the composer of this hymn collection in only a very limited sense (something the writer himself also mentions), the count-author has borrowed the title of the prince's work for his novel. This was in order to create as it were "celestial harmony", and to pour oil on the troubled waters of the twentieth century history of Esterházy's own direct line of ascendancy. Perhaps it was also to create at last a "Harmonia caelestis" as a work of the Esterházys. Naturally Péter Esterházy would not be Péter Esterházy if he did not, to a certain degree, revoke all this ironically. Since in reality he too can only be regarded in a limited sense as the author of his *Harmonia caelestis*—his novel (anthology? montage?) being practically a communal work; the Esterházy family itself has written it. In places this is literally true, elsewhere it is true in that figurative sense that the Esterházys, "My Dear Fathers", mean the whole of Hungarian history and cultural tradition to the writer.

At the very beginning of his book he writes of his "Dear Father", in all probability quoting (without naming) a well-known Hungarian author-ancestor. He most probably refers to a descendant of the princely branch, "Miklós the Lover of Pomp" (or "Miklós the Glorious"), the man who built the luxurious palace at Eszterháza (today's Fertőd), known as the "Hungarian Versailles" and also Haydn's patron:

> Here follows my dear father's name!—This name represents a dream; a Hungarian dream of an extravagant, rich individual, of a gentleman rummaging in his purse with two hands, of a lord who measures his gold and silver by the bushel, whose character is almost the stuff that folk-tales are made of. It represented a rich Hungarian... In the Hungarian imagination my father's name stood for everything that can make life on earth, Heaven.

However, "My Dear Father", that is, the Esterházys, any one of them, or indeed anyone you care to think of who is associated with Hungarian life and history, as are the Esterházys, could represent anything, not just the Hungarian dream, anything or nothing at the same time. At one time the Esterházys owned "everything", and they took this for granted. They could not imagine life in any other way, just that everything was theirs as far as the eye could see. Neither were they able to imagine that one day they could lose this everything, which was what happened after 1945. The everything became nothing.

> Everything down to the last nail has been ransacked, everything, the country... and with what cunning!

the slightly inebriated father—narrator, breaks out bitterly to the little boy at the end of the novel.

> It was as if the country (itself) had stolen from itself... They've ransacked it, ransacked it... Who has? Why... there's no-one here, only us, we are everything.

Esterházy's monumental saga is constructed on the rather ambitious contrast between everything and nothing. It seeks to portray everything and nothing in the Esterházy destiny. On the one hand, the unimaginable wealth and power, the continuous historical presence, being identified with the country, and the naturalness of having everything, and on the other hand, that situation in which all this suddenly becomes equally naturally nothing. He describes aristocratism as being wholly identified with the everything, more precisely with the possession of the country, and with the feeling of "we are everything" ("My father's family has been unable to preserve forms, being the form itself, simply because they could not take an outside viewpoint"). So it was not really possible to take anything (the country?) from the

Esterházys. Looking at it in this way, there is not such a big difference between everything and nothing. The apparent contrast dissolves into "celestial harmony" in the boy's' memory.

There is also another way of looking at the unifying of the contrast between everything and nothing. "Numbered Sentences from the Life of the Esterházy Family", covering the first part of a 700-page book, is made up of 371 numbered passages. Throughout these the narrator—the son—calls his "heroes" "My Dear Father" in every single section (these being prose drafts and fragments usually shorter than one page). These dear fathers —or as Esterházy says "Fathers of mine"—are either Esterházys, people both identifiable and unidentifiable, from the family portrait gallery or family mythology, historical and fictitious people, or "anybodies"; anonymous, whoever-you-like figures, everyday beings who do not even have distinctive features in the one-line anecdotal, short story-like or absurd flourishes of text. They are simply there, representing "everything". Esterházy's narrator, again not without a touch of arrogance, considers his father to be this everything and in representing this everything wishes, as a descendant of this, to leave behind textual traces. When all is said and done there is room for anything in this everything, not only for personal and family memories (still less for amiable, flattering memories), but also for meanness and insanity, nastiness and indecency. "My dear father" (which in Hungarian is more intimate and more respectful than "My father") and the fond, personal or legendary historical memories which accompany this, time and time again come up against coarse and obscene sections of text. The conflicting values pervade and undermine each other. "My dear father" covers areas which we are unwilling to admit to in ourselves and in our families, which in this case can be taken for all Hungarian reality. At the same time, by using the expression "My dear father", it becomes human, personal, ours, and part of our lives.

With the "My dear father" label Esterházy ritually takes back everything that was taken from him (them). At the same time he, as an individual and narrator, practically disappears, becoming nothing in the process. He makes the Esterházy (that is to say the Hungarian) memory speak with sentences taken from the life of the Esterházy family. These are anecdotes and snippets of stories taken from the Hungarian past, both long gone and recent through which,—in fact with a newer and larger than "little" Hungarian pornography, the Esterházy, that is the collective Hungarian memory speaks.* Accordingly, the prose quotes at every turn, from authentic historical sources, old family records, literary works and Péter Esterházy himself too. The source of the quotations is not given and it would be beyond a scholar's imagination to say where they are all from. Alongside the sacred and profane dimensions also the time-frames are continually being confused. Within one passage the speech styles and characteristics of different ages are layered upon each other.

The second book of *Harmonia caelestis*, "Confessions of an Esterházy family", is completely different from the fragmentary and multi-layered montage of the first book. It is almost a straightforward autobiography or saga, whose figures are claimed to be (by author's notes in the preface) "fictitious characters". He goes

* "Little Hungarian Pornography" is the title of one of Esterházy's earlier novels.

on, "only in the pages of this book do they have existence and personalities, in reality they do not exist and never have". In reality, however, they are easily identifiable, real people --at least those people are on whom the writer has modelled them and whose names they bear, and of whom they without doubt remind us. In this way, talking about his own childhood, it would be difficult to imagine anything other than the writer himself in place of the "I" narrator. He plays roles less often and takes a much less literary approach than in his earlier first-person works. At the same time, Péter Esterházy, as a descendant of the Esterházy family, as a successful narrator and as a well-known figure, cannot talk openly. He cannot make confessions; especially not if they are about Esterházyness and his relationship to it, without an image being projected on him of an aristocrat who has gone down in the world. Like the old Esterházy, this new one, the writer, is not just himself, he is more than even his role as "fictitious" writer-narrator; he is the Esterházy who has become a writer. So whether he likes it or not, as a writer he must bear his Esterházyness—quite a burdensome, worn, unstable legacy, even after the Socialist decades. In his first-person family confessions he has, after all, to take all these things into consideration in the same way as the narrator of the first book's text variations did, layering the personal and impersonal, the private world and the communal. Accordingly, both the title of the second book, "Confessions of an Esterházy family" (the title of the first book is about *the* Esterházy family), the many minute, broken-up chapters (201 in number), and the anecdotal treatment allude to the first book. So in this respect, and also in many others—in just how many only a more detailed examination can establish—in spite of all its striking differences the second book is the continuation of the first. After *the* Esterházys, what we have here is at one and the same time the history of one of the branches of the family and a *Hungarian* history. It is about the history of one Hungarian family. A family to which 1945, the "liberation" and, not much later, the Rákosi era brought impossible and undigestible changes. This was the case for so many other Hungarian families, in fact for the history of the whole country (1948 being the year of change).

In his works so far, Esterházy has avoided the issue of his parentage, only alluding to it ironically as something which it is impossible to ignore, since the texts themselves time after time comment on that literary tradition and the surroundings in which it came into being. The subtle game of relevant allusions played a particularly important role in his writings inspired, in part or wholly, by his family and his private life *(Novel of Production, Helping Verbs of the Heart, The Book of Hrabal).* At the same time, these works are characterised by the fact that the frank confessions of the Esterházy heritage have, almost ostentatiously, been left out, as has the account of what it meant in the '50s and '60s and what it means today to be an Esterházy. That is to say, to lose everything or even more than everything, while at the same time to be spectacularly, deeply and irrevocably rooted in the art and history of Hungary.

So after a long silence this new novel is now paying off the debts. The fact that these were debts, and Esterházy himself felt them to be so, is proved by the new book. Esterházy the reserved writer of multi-layered, self-mocking, post-modern texts suddenly begins narrating in a liberated and almost loquacious way. He talks about his grandparents, his parents, his childhood, the Hungarian Soviet Republic,

forced relocation and military service. His virtuoso writing technique, intelligence, 1919 humour and self-mockery sparkle in these confessions. However, this time his main aim is not the creation of an unconventional, self-propelling, self-reflecting text, but to create living characters and places in the truest sense.

The fragmentation and reflection certainly remain. He narrates in a rambling way, interrupting his chapters at every step in order to insert episodes and scenes which flash through his mind from other times. This is not even a story insomuch as there is no unbroken continuity, no linear process, no climax(es), in point of fact it has neither beginning nor end. These are real confessions, we could even say Rousseauesque, Goethean, autobiographical confessions. Their protagonist, who has been developed beyond the innumerable beautifully formed characters (among them the child Esterházy), is the narrator who is invisible but whose presence is still directly and emphatically felt through his tone and structural principles. If we really want to we can piece together the family story from the previous scattered anecdotal events and of course from the "antecedents" of the first book. The "beginning" can be marked in 1919, the time of the Hungairian Soviet Republic, for two reasons; the family in the person of the grandparents come up against Communism for the first time, which two and a half decades later is to "wipe them off". This is also the time when the father comes into the world and can live the life that was his birthright only as a young man. The grandfather, Count Móric Esterházy, was Prime Minister of Hungary for six months in 1917. These were the final days of the Habsburg Monarchy, and he held this post among ever more chaotic conditions. In the spring of 1919 Béla Kun and the Communists took over and occupied his mansion at Csákvár, and the grandson makes him speak in quotation marks as it were, on the basis of his own original confessions. We do not know whether notes by Móric Esterházy really have survived, but that these quoted passages are for the most part not the sort of thing he would write and are apocryphal, seems certain. Esterházy often uses quotation marks when he himself is speaking, and does not mark texts which really are quotations. Perhaps along with memories of text he sometimes writes his grandfather's memories, and sometimes borrows his third person texts to add to it. This is the grandfather with the vicissitudinous fate who, in his declining years, even endured internal exile and in 1956, at the age of seventy-five, completely broken, left for Vienna, leaving behind his wife, who chose to remain faithful to the country, his children and grandchildren. Nevertheless (or precisely because of the writer's literary manoeuvrings), he forms a vivid and remarkable figure; highly responsible and dignified as a self-governing grand seigneur, about whom we can not know how accurate a picture this is, but who makes us believe it to be so. Incidentally however, Esterházy, not without reason, draws our attention to the fact that his characters are imaginary figures.

The situation is similar with two further protagonists; the father, Count Mátyás Esterházy, who spent the best part of his life in abject poverty, in humiliation, in endless drudgery—at first physical, later mental (for years he was a translator for the present *Hungarian Quarterly*'s predecessor, *The New Hungarian Quarterly*), and the mother who, daughter of the grandfather's estate steward, became the wife of the already declassé young gentleman, and then mother of his four children. The confessions convince us that they too were

precisely as they have been brought to life on the pages of the book and everything happened to them precisely as we read it —their becoming acquainted with one another, their arguments, joys, suffering, celebrations and weekdays. However in a large part of the story the majority of the carefully and minutely worked out (novel!) scenes take place in a time of which the narrator could not have direct personal recollections. Episodes from his own and his brothers' and sisters' childhoods, although temptingly and enchantingly original, and genuine too, have nevertheless been "written" and are "imaginary" memories, which have a place only on the pages of this book.

So Esterházy thus recalls the story of his childhood and family; by "writing" it or, to be more precise, not just in his "own" words, but also with "borrowed" material. That is he wrote it with words and sentences from that memory in which the personal and mythical, the provable and the fictitious, the timelessly continuous and the anecdotally rounded off events are washed together. It is beyond doubt that a special attraction binds Esterházy to this type of plot and history, to the anecdotal, to the typically Hungarian kind of narrative. So when all is said and done his book can be regarded as a large collection of family anecdotes too, where the family means the extended family, the national community.

In terms of current Hungarian political values and commonly-held beliefs, Esterházy is classed as a liberal author. The national-conservative side blames him for the fact that, as far as his sympathies and side-taking are concerned, he has disowned his ancestry, betrayed it and joined the liberals. Well, if there exists a piece of literature which gives a more truthful and contemporary description of nation and family ideas than those of authors proclaimed to be nationalist and conservative, then it is *Harmonia Caelestis.* ❧

Bruce Berlind

# Two Hungarian Poets in English

György Petri: *Eternal Monday: New and Selected Poems.*
Translated by Clive Wilmer & George Gömöri. *Newcastle-on-Tyne.*
Bloodaxe Books, 1999, 95 pp. • Sándor Kányádi: *There Is a Land: Selected Poems,*
Selected and Translated by Peter Zollman, Budapest, Corvina, 2000, 105 pp.

At a meeting of poets and translators some months ago in New York, a lanky long-haired Hungarian with a ring on each of his ten fingers—he might have been in his late 'twenties or even a decade older—approached me during a lull in the proceedings and launched into an angry, disconsolate diatribe directed at those he considered the "establishment" figures of Hungarian poetry. Aside from his complaint that these people were ignoring his own work, he also complained that they distorted the contemporary poetry scene in Hungary. "The only important poet today," he said, "is Petri." When I ventured that there might be a few other poets of the first rank, he dismissed each of my suggestions with a wave of his hand.

The puzzlement I felt about this fellow surfaced again when I was reading through Wilmer and Gömöri's excellent selection of György Petri's poems. I thought there was something incongruous about a young man who looked like a Woodstock rebel of 1969 feeling a need to champion, in 1999, a poet nearing the age of sixty, who has been free for ten years to write and publish what he pleases, who is indeed, yes, one of the most important poets in Hungary, and who is certainly the most popular. But my puzzlement has given way to a sense of rightness: The fellow in New York wishes he lived in a Woodstock world; so, with the necessary substitutions for history and context, does Petri.*

The essentials of Petri's early life are by now well known: how it was the crushing of the Hungarian uprising, when he was thirteen, that jarred him into writing poetry; that he held odd jobs, including a stint at work-therapy in a mental institution, before studying philosophy and psychology at Budapest University; that his first two collections, in 1971 and 1974, contained stunning poems—still today, some of his best, alternately tender, witty, bitter and cagily political—that gained him a wide audience. And that then he dropped out. I put it that way because it need not have happened. The state publishing house that had issued the first two books would have

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* This review had been written before Petri died on July 16, 2000. See the obituary and the poems in his memory in this issue. – The Editor

published the third if Petri had been willing to delete some overtly political poems. He was not; the book appeared in 1981 in samizdat, as did all of his poetry until the meltdown of 1989; and officially he became an unperson. But only officially: one hopes that the regime was aware of its tactical mistake, since his new status was in large measure the cause of his popularity going off the charts.

What is interesting about Petri's form of rebellion is that it was not the usual way in Hungary during the long years of the Kádár reign, at least among poets who continued writing without succumbing to the official ethos. The norm was a sort of evasiveness, which among the best poets could result in stylistic strategies that gave their work an individual tone, at the same time as it preserved their moral stance toward the totalitarian state. (See, for instance, my essay, "Poetry and Politics: The Example of Ágnes Nemes Nagy" in *The American Poetry Review* [January/February 1993]). Petri preferred to speak out, at considerable cost to his personal comfort, but satisfying the imperatives of his sense of honesty. If I had known more Hungarian, and if my connections to the world of Hungarian poetry had not been almost entirely officially arranged, I might have been aware of him during my several stays in Budapest during the 'seventies and 'eighties. Miklós Vajda had included three uncontroversial poems in his *Contemporary Hungarian Poetry* of 1977 (one of them the marvelous "With the Thin Girl"), but they were the only ones I had read. Then suddenly, in 1991, I was making my own translations of his work, under official auspices, and listening to his voice on the only audio cassette of a living poet that I could find in Budapest. The unperson years were over.

Wilmer and Gömöri's selections observe the three major divisions in Petri's working life: poems from the officially sanctioned first two books, those from the samizdat period, and some from the post-Communist years. Poems with political baggage appear one way or another throughout the selection, as do poems of love and death (often the same). Petri's eschatology is simple: we are biodegradable, nowhere more forcefully, wittily, and affectionately expressed than in "Ideas and Dance-Music Records," a poem (one can't call it an elegy) on the late István Vas. A problem that arose after 1989, which both Petri and his editors acknowledge, is what the political excoriator does when the enemy has disappeared. "The epoch expired like a monstrous predator./My favourite toy's been snatched." So go the final two lines of this selection. And Wilmer, in the course of a fine and informative introduction, remarks that "Petri's subject matter is often elusively tenuous in a way that seemed less the case when he had an enemy to focus on." More than that, some of the late poems in the selection, among them "Pop Song," "The Nothing Going On," and the rambling extract from "The Great Journey," a poem presumably in progress, strike me as self-indulgent and sentimental. One hopes these are temporary lapses, and that his reflectively nihilistic sensibility, which can enliven any political perspective, will find new outlets. And above all one hopes that we'll see more of his wonderfully quirky love poems—"From the Songs of the Doleful Lover," "To a Virtuous Lady," "Tick-Tock," "S. K.," "Rhapsody," and many others not in this selection. Meanwhile, I wish that *Eternal Monday* were twice as long.

A book-length English translation of Sándor Kányádi's poems is long overdue. A major figure among Transylvanian Hungarians, his writing career now spans half a century. In his early seventies, he

continues to live in Cluj–Kolozsvár, although the small village where he was born and grew up persists as an Edenic memory in his poetry.

The sense of living in a post-lapsarian world must have several levels of meaning for Kányádi and for Transylvanian poets generally.

After the Trianon Treaty imposed on Hungary following World War I, they found themselves—except for a brief period during and after the Second World War—living under a foreign flag. And after the accession of Nicolae Ceaucescu in the mid-sixties, they found themselves the victims of nothing less than cultural genocide: Hungarian schools, publications, broadcasts, and the language itself, were radically curtailed when they were not totally prohibited. Ceaucescu's madness—and I use the term in its clinical sense—accelerated beyond his attempt to eliminate Hungarian cultural values, so that through his so-called "regional development plan" (a.k.a. the bulldozer programme) he was effectively destroying the cultural values of all Romania. Even in Bucharest in September 1989, when I was bussed down a principal boulevard, still preserved for its embassies and the homes of party apparatchiks, most private houses had been razed, and the residents were being relocated in high-rise apartments. But I could peer down the cross streets and see... nothing. The boulevard was like a film-set façade. And nobody guessed that in three months Ceaucescu and his equally mad wife would be taken captive, tried, and executed.

These matters are not extraneous to Kányádi's poetry. I rehearse them as a way of trying to imagine the sensibilities of a poet of Kányádi's stature, in effect for his entire life. With few exceptions, most poets since the middle of the twentieth century have been what can be called passive anarchists. When able, we have voted, since there is always the lesser (or least) of evils. And what one attempts to deny varies in its relative repugnance and from nation to nation. But Kányádi's situation stretches the imagination. He is an exile from the land of his heritage.

Still, he loves the land of his exile, whose regime, however, attempted to expunge all traces of the heritage that survived the juggling of national boundaries. And the political system for all his countrymen (on both sides of the border but more so in the land of his birth) was for most of his life repressive, dictatorial—indeed, totally lunatic. The poetry that is written in such a context must be under enormous pressure. Unfortunately, Peter Zollman's selection provides only sporadic evidence of this. The point is not that every poem should be an expression of agony, but that the reader should be supplied with a more convincing sense of Kányádi's context than Zollman supplies. His intent seems to have been a selection that suggests the different kinds of poetry Kányádi has written—a taste of this and a taste of that—each this and that allotted its own section. So the forty-three poems are presented in nine sections; and while each poem is dated, one wonders why, since they are not in chronological order. They range from a few children's poems to the long, complex "All Souls' Day in Vienna." Notwithstanding the inclusion of some of Kányádi's best poems, the book has a lightweight quality that does him no service.

I must confess that I began reading the book with some trepidation: Zollman's translations of other poets have struck me for the most part as proceeding from a tin ear for the complexities of iambic verse in English and being damaged by his insistence on replicating Hungarian rhyme schemes. Fortunately, fewer than half the poems in the Kányádi book are rhymed and metrical, and Zollman's translations in

free verse and syllabics (including a few in haiku stanza) are for the most part eminently readable. But the metrical translations, especially their attempts at rhyming, are often quite bad and at times distort the sense of the Hungarian. One example will suffice.

A poem of 1982, "Éjfél utáni nyelv," which Zollman translates as "After-Midnight Dialect," begins

*there is a land where late at night*
*in waiting rooms the dingy light*
*and evil-smelling smoke conspire*
*to smoulder like the dead campfire*
*of a half-nomadic sect*
*who jabber in an after-midnight dialect ...*

Zollman's choice of the word "dialect" misses at the outset a major import of the poem: it is not a dialect, but a whole language (surely Hungarian, endangered and spoken surreptitiously). My guess is that Zollman chose dialect because there is no exact rhyme for language. But he goes even further afield from the poem by postulating a sect that is speaking the dialect. Not so. Kányádi constructed a brilliant trope: it is the language that pitches its camp, not any speakers of the language. We smell the rank air, we hear groans and curses and raucous laughter, but we are not permitted to see anyone until a vision takes over. And it is a vision of drunken, displaced persons. (The diaspora motif is one which Kányádi had treated earlier in "All Souls' Day in Vienna.") The climax of the vision is "the big-headed shaggy voracious/Christ of the after-midnight language" [my translation]—a second coming which will be more like Yeats's "rough beast" than a Christmas card crêche scene. Zollman again misses the centrality of language in his final couplet: "this voracious infant shaggy curled/Christchild of the after-midnight world." (And there is no warrant for "curled" except the rhyme.) In short, the poem is diminished and trivialized in this version. Zollman's sing-song iambics and forced rhyming are as responsible for this as his initial misreading of the poem.

We still need a Kányádi. ❧

György Litván

# To His Own Self True

Gyula Schöpflin: *Marokszedés* (Gathering). Budapest, Argumentum, 2000, 301 pp.

The book offers a selection from Gyula Schöpflin's essays and articles produced—my hand trembles as I write it down—over almost seven decades. It all began in the 1930s with his writings published in the leading Hungarian literary journal *Nyugat* and the left-wing newspaper *Gondolat* under the pseudonym István Nagypál (as his father was Aladár Schöpflin, the well-known critic and editor of *Nyugat,* he thought it proper to use a pseudonym). Then came the articles he wrote while he was director of programmes for Hungarian Radio, a post he held after 1945. In exile he wrote reviews and articles for *Új Látóhatár* in Munich and for *Irodalmi Újság,* first published in London and later in Paris. Finally, in the 1980s and 1990s, he was once again able to write for journals and newspapers in Hungary. In the last of his pieces written in 1999 and entitled *Kettős hazafiság* (Dual Patriotism), he celebrated the 90th birthday of François Fejtő, his senior by just one year.

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Whether it was the author's or his editor's suggestion, the decision to drop the chronological order in favour of an arrangement according to genre deserves praise. As a result, we find articles side by side that are dated fifty years apart. This arrangement highlights a number of important features of the book and its author and, above all else, serves to underline the continuity of themes, style and tone. It was this continuity spanning over seven decades that charmed and impressed me beyond measure, especially in view of the fact that the period in question produced some spectacular convulsions and U-turns in history, and that the author himself, instead of weathering the storm in the shelter of some quiet library, took an active part—in his own modest and reserved way—in the trials and tribulations of the brutal 20th century. (As he put it in a retrospective article in 1951, he travelled along "a bumpy road".)

He seemed set for a relatively smooth and straightforward life. Of a good family, his intellect earned him a place in Eötvös College, the legendary elite-training institute, after his secondary-school years and a place on the *Nyugat* staff a few years later. He could have spent his entire life in dedication to literature, which, following the family tradition, remained his consuming interest. After the death of Sándor

Márai, an outstanding writer of the inter-war years who self-exiled himself to the West in 1947, he wrote on their friendship: "Like the Grosschmidts [Márai's original name], the Schöpflins came from Felvidék (Upper Hungary, now part of Slovakia), from the earlier battlements of sad Hungarian culture. My father and mother exemplified the way of life of the hard-working, modest and educated liberal bourgeoisie, just as did Márai. I rebelled against this, he abided by it; then I myself returned to their values with head hung low."

Rebellion meant taking part in the Communist student movement with the likes of László Rajk, François Fejtő and dozens of other promising young intellectuals. He was arrested in 1932. Before the trial all that his father asked of him was: "Son, conduct yourself like a gentleman!" He was sentenced to four months in prison. Having served that much time in police custody, he was free to go after the trial; nevertheless, this episode dramatically changed his future life. Instead of completing his university education, he became the deputy editor of, and a regular contributor to, the legally produced Communist newspaper *Gondolat*. Through his articles written in the 1930s (*Seregszemle*—Muster, *Új március*—New March; *Levél egy elcsüggedt barátomhoz*—A Letter to a Disheartened Friend) he did his best to stop the country's drift towards fascism, to promote the creation of a popular front against it, and to throw light on the chaos in intellectual life from the standpoint of a firm worldview. "Don't be frightened to live and don't be frightened to write, since the two mean the same in our case," he encouraged his friends and himself. He remained true to his upbringing, his manners, and his father's admonition. In his frequent disputes with László Németh, the leading figure of the populist writers, István Nagypál's manners were always impeccable; instead of "stigmatization", he tried to apply the power of persuasion.

Naturally, in 1945 he joined the people who wanted to build a new Hungary. First he became the secretary of a local MKP (Hungarian Communist Party) branch in central Budapest, then he worked for Hungarian Radio as programme director, and finally he was appointed Hungary's envoy to Sweden. He never denounced this period of his life. "For a few years after 1945 it was good to be a Communist intellectual in Hungary," he wrote in the article "A Bumpy Ride". He revealed in the same article that in exile he read *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, Bertrand Russell's book written after a visit to the Soviet Union, and a "deep intellectual remorse" overcame him on seeing the date of publication, 1921. That was when he seriously started to think about how it had been possible for so many of the educated and intelligent, himself included, to remain under the spell of Communism after so many ugly experiences. "I denoted the first and perhaps the most profound category of reasons with a single notion: Central Europe," he claimed. After listing a few examples he summed up his verdict: "...there was no middle road between revolution and conformism in Hungary. People who, after such a youthful burst of enthusiasm, would have become reformers, liberals or simply progressively minded men anywhere else in the world, here in Hungary remained Communists out of spite, under coercion, or to preserve their human dignity." Of course, once those fine years had passed, Schöpflin himself inevitably found out how his past could be turned against him. In 1949 a "new cadre" fell on him with the following question: "Comrade Schöpflin was destructive under the Horthy regime; what is the guarantee that he would not become destructive in today's system?"

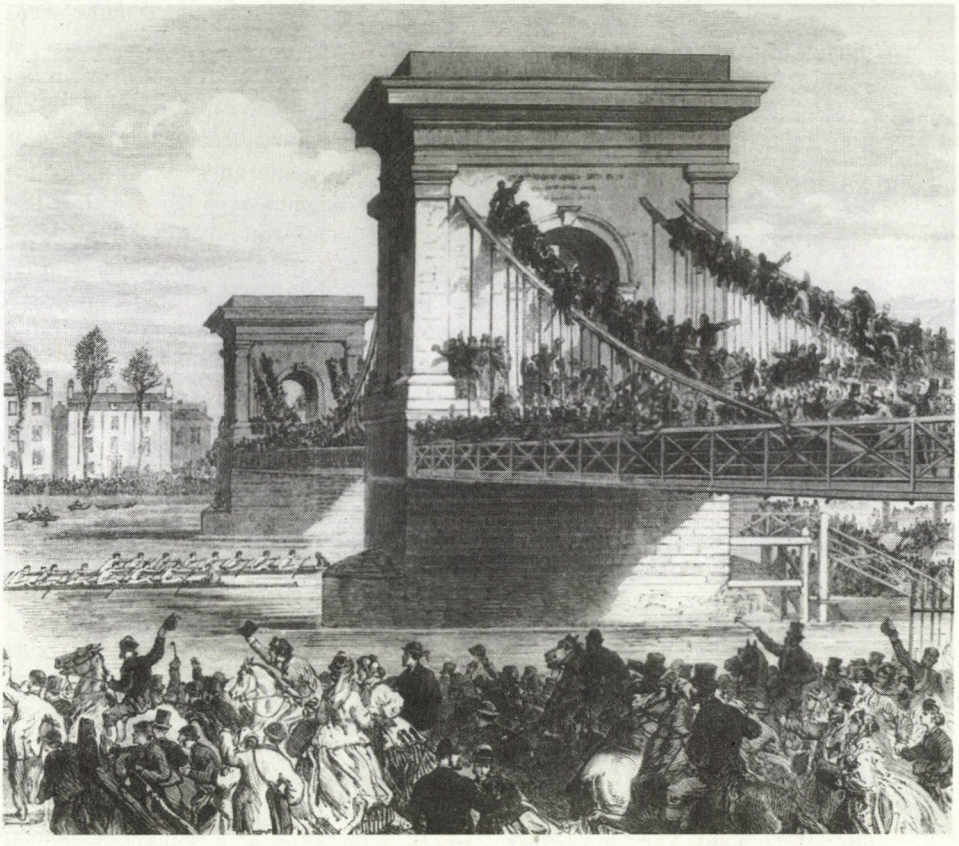
To make him decide to cut the ties he needed the shock of the trumped-up charges against the Minister of the Interior, László Rajk, as well as the experience of fearing for his own life. His name was mentioned several times during the trial, which he was fortunate enough to follow from a distance, tuning into the radio at the Hungarian Legation in Stockholm. From the real and alleged events of their shared past, he could have written his own list of charges, he claimed. So in early January 1950, when he was recalled to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hungary in order "to discuss a few questions", he packed up his family and headed for London instead of Budapest. Perhaps he still does not know after fifty years that the planned defection of Hungary's Minister in Stockholm was reported by an informer to the Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Arthur London in Prague, who in turn promptly notified the Hungarian authorities. (This I discovered recently from the Czech-French historian Karel Bartosek's book about the relations between Czech and French Communists.) Fortunately, they could do nothing to prevent the escape.

The essays he wrote in exile in Great Britain continued in the vein of his earlier writings, in both themes and style. Communism in Hungary and Hungarian literature remained his chief interests. On the first theme he published objective, analytical and quite pioneering (but for the same reason occasionally inaccurate—see his account of the Moscow emigration!) pieces, covering both the underground movement and the struggle for power after 1945. "Az illegális kommunista párt Magyarországon" —The Illegal Communist Party in Hungary, "A Magyar Kommunista Párt útja 1945–1950"—The Road of the Hungarian Communist Party 1945–1950, "Göröngyös út"—A Bumpy Ride, "A magyar kommunizmus hetven éve"—Seventy Years of Hungarian Communism, "Demokratikus szocializmus?"—Democratic Socialism?) In the latter article, written in connection with the 1956 events, he expounded the—by now widely accepted—view that democratic socialism was just as utopian as its previous versions. He obviously regarded it his duty to pass on his personal experiences, his own fallacies and considerable expertise on this topic, so as to save future generations from making the same mistake.

Still, the topic closest to his heart has remained Hungarian literature, its past and present condition both in Hungary and in the world at large, and especially among the diaspora in exile. "It is good to come home as a visitor and submerge in the sweet mother tongue (although this, too, has changed, often throwing me in confusion). However, there is one invisible thread that will always bind me here—Hungarian literature." He bade farewell to Pál Ignotus, Gyula Illyés, and Sándor Márai in fine obituaries. He follows the new developments in contemporary Hungarian literature, praises and criticizes the latest findings on the history of literature, and gives a comprehensive survey on the condition and the tasks of Hungarian literature written abroad. But what primarily interests him is the continuity of Hungarian literature as a whole, the idea of preserving values. And here, once again, we find a wonderful example of continuity that has lasted over several decades. In an article written in 1937 for *Nyugat* he discussed his father's book on the history of Hungarian literature, which he himself had helped to write. After reading the proofs he came to realize that, in their revolutionary fervour, his generation looked down on the worldview of his father's generation, rating it outmoded. "Today I look up to them with respect and envy. They achiev-

ed much more than we did—perhaps because they chose not to get entangled in the hustle between literature and daily politics but stuck to the standards of writing." These were the words of a 27-year-old revolutionary who almost fifty years later published an exceptionally interesting article on the relations between conservatism and modernism in *Új Látóhatár*. This confirmed, once again, his ability to revise, softly but unequivocally, the one-sided approach and the false reflexes he and his own circle had demonstrated. And all the time he remains faithful to himself, never trying to extricate himself from his past.

Gyula Schöpflin's book is both exciting and reassuring. He adds the more measured voices of earlier generations to our hectic and vitriolic public life, reviving their balanced and more enduring approach. This is underlined by the artlessness and calmness of his style, which nevertheless livens up whenever the topic calls for it, as for example, when writing on revisiting Transylvania or on protecting our intellectual values. In short, we, readers and friends of Gyula Schöpflin, have received a fine birthday present from a man who has just turned ninety. ❧



Olga Fabian

*London crowds watching the Boat Race from Hammersmith Bridge.*
The Illustrated London News, *31 March 1866.*

János Végh

# What Clarks Have Joined Together...

Imre Gáll and Szilvia Andrea Holló, eds.: *The Széchenyi Chain Bridge and Adam Clark.* Budapest, City Hall Publishing House, 1999, 208 pp.

The Chain Bridge, one of the gems of the Hungarian capital and perhaps the architectural structure best loved by its inhabitants, is often used as the symbol of Budapest. Like most bridges, it connects the two banks of a river; and metaphorically it is a link between Great Britain and Hungary as well. The best-known of Budapest's (and for that matter of all Hungarian) bridges, it was designed by an Englishman, William Tierney Clark, and the construction was supervised by a Scotsman, Adam Clark (no relation), who grew so fond of Hungary that he married and settled here. He was welcomed and his name was soon Hungarianized, both in spelling and with the Christian name coming after the family name, to Clark Ádám.

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***János Végh***
*is Professor of Art History at the Academy of Applied Arts, Budapest. His books include:* Fifteenth Century German and Bohemian Panel Paintings in Hungarian Museums *(1967),* Sixteenth Century German Paintings in Hungarian Museums *(1972),* Early Netherlands Paintings *(1977), all from Corvina Press, Budapest, and also in English.*

The city itself has only borne the name Budapest since 1873, when its two formerly independent parts, Pest and Buda, were unified, together with Óbuda. They had been separated by the Danube, here not much wider than the Thames in London. Buda had been built in medieval times on a steep and easy to defend hill on the right bank, and became the royal seat and capital. At the time, Pest was in law simply an attachment to Buda, with a certain amount of autonomy. In the Middle Ages the two were connected by a ferry, while in the 16th and 17th centuries a pontoon bridge occasionally connected the two. The 18th century, the first prolonged period of relative peace and quiet in Hungary after the early 16th century, felt the need for a permanent link. First a flying bridge was built, replaced in 1767 with a pontoon bridge consisting of 46 boats anchored and fastened together, much subjected to the vagaries of the weather. It was wide enough for two carts, leaving just enough room on either side for pedestrians to cross in single file in one direction only.

The pontoon bridge was permanent only by comparison with earlier efforts. When the thaw or floods came, it had to be removed—and this was both inconvenient and expensive. When there was a flood, passengers were carried over in boats

(with a tariff dramatically increased) while the spring thaw rendered all contact impossible between the two banks. In those days the river not infreqently froze over, and when it was covered with a thick layer of ice, wheelbarrows and tumbrils were allowed to cross, although carts were considered too heavy. This regular loss of contact, lasting sometimes for weeks or even longer, seriously affected the life of the residents of both cities, especially merchants, even if they had become somewhat accustomed to these interruptions. On the other hand, those travelling on their own account or on official business, were baffled and appalled at being forced to interrupt their journey for several weeks.

Towards the end of the 18th century the idea of constructing a permanent bridge came to the fore. Apart from the problem of the vast funds required for a project of such a scale, there was also the basic technical dilemma of whether the bridge should be a pier bridge or a suspension bridge. They were wary about the first solution for fear of increasing the danger of a flood by blocking the ice drift with a row of piers, while the suspension bridge was little known in this part of Europe. Suspension bridges had been erected in England, France and Germany for over fifty years then, but those countries were a long way off and all their bridges had been built over rivers much narrower than the Danube.

The project was first taken closer to success when István Széchenyi took an interest in it. He followed the most noble traditions of the Hungarian aristocracy. He came from a family that had established a good, non-rebellious reputation for themselves at the Habsburg court in Vienna, which allowed him to carry out his projects without the authorities trying to block any of his efforts from the start.

*Manó Andrássy, Károly Sterio:*
Count István Széchenyi dressed in the "English" fashion, with the Chain Bridge under construction behind him, *1857.*
*Library of the Academy of Sciences.*

Count István spared no effort in combating the backwardness of Hungary, a backwardness due to its lack of independence, its remoteness, and, more often than not, the general lethargy and passivity of its people. The Hungarian aristocracy of the Enlightenment and the era labelled "The Age of Reform" (the two decades immediately preceding 1848) had to take the initiative in many areas where, in more fortunate countries, the initiatives would come from the ruler. István Széchenyi's father, for instance, donated his precious collection of books and medals to the nation, a collection which was to become the core of today's National Museum. His son of-


BENCE KÉPESSY

*Miklós Barabás, Frigyes Walzer:*
Adam Clark, with the Chain Bridge in the background, *1840.*
*Historical Portrait Archives of the Hungarian National Museum.*

fered one year of the income from his vast estates as the financial basis for a Scientific Society—whence sprang the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Apart from his money, István Széchenyi never hesitated to make use of his excellent management skills. When it came to a worthy cause, he was so determined that nothing could stop him. As he wrote, "They may cut my wings and I shall walk. If they cut my legs off, I shall walk on my hands, they tear off my hands, I shall crawl on my stomach. To be of use at any cost." He did much to improve the transportation network of Hungary. An important part in this was the regulation of a stretch of the Danube—the Iron Gates. This stretch of the river, crossing present-day Yugoslavia and Romania, could not be used by river traffic because of the sharp rocks covering its bed. Removing these rocks with explosives opened the passage to the Black Sea for Hungarian ships. Széchenyi also initiated the flood protection work on the River Tisza, introduced steamboats onto Lake Balaton and brought horseracing to Hungary.

In the case of the construction of the Chain Bridge, the importance of the issue and the high costs made it impossible for him to carry out the whole project alone. So he gained the consent of the Habsburg Palatine—in essence a Lord Lieutenant of Hungary—which made it possible to collect all the necessary data concerning the Danube. By founding a 'Bridge Society', he raised the interest of several groups, and as soon as some in the highest circles in the land decided to join, bankers ceased to be reluctant to finance the project. Strange as it may sound, the government took no part in the project whatsoever, and thus the first—and for quite long time the one and only—permanent bridge to cross the Middle and Lower Danube was built as a private enterprise.

It took much effort to complete. Széchenyi, a great admirer of English industrial progress, obviously decided to invite English know-how when it came to the technological realization of his idea. He got in touch with Brunel, the famous bridge and tunnel engineer, as early as 1827. His two trips to Britain in 1832 and 1833/34 served the purpose of preparing the construction. It was in this period that he met Tierney Clark, the civil engineer of London's Hammersith Bridge, which is still standing, though no longer in use. Clark's suggestion, that of a suspension bridge with two piers in the river, soon gained dominance. After several trips to Hungary and detailed observation of the site, Clark agreed to draw the plans in 1839. However, he had several other com-

missions to complete, so rather than coming to live to Hungary, he offered the post of resident engineer to a young Scotsman, who had gained some experience in navigation on the Danube by designing and testing a dredger here.

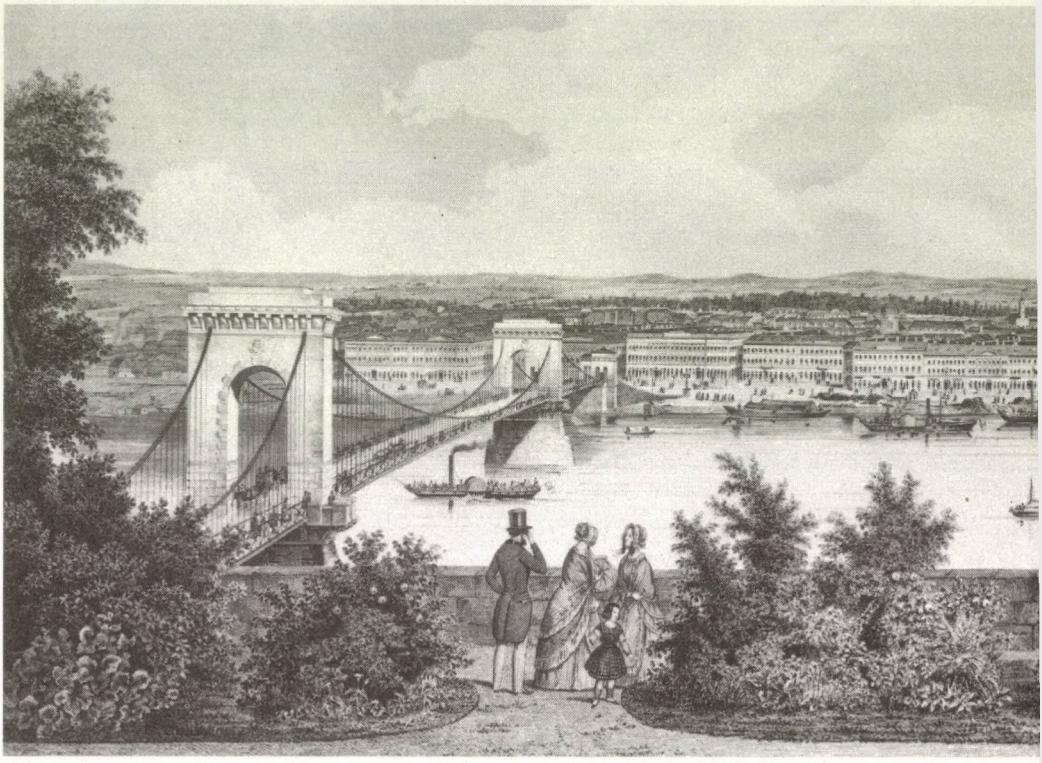
Construction began in 1839, when piles of top quality timber were placed at the bottom, as the first stage of building a lock chamber, which housed the two piers under construction. Both Clarks agreed that only top quality material was to be used, so the granite to cover the piers was brought from Mauthausen, in Upper Austria, while the steel for the chains came straight from England. It was a complicated process, but it brought perfect results. The first real-life testing occurred in 1849, when the insurgent Hungarian troops followed by the Habsburg army marched along the newly built bridge with all their artillery and ammunition. The bridge was officially opened in late 1849, after the collapse of the Revolution, and the ceremony had no significance whatsoever. Neither Széchenyi nor Tierney Clarke attended.

The Chain Bridge has served as a link between the two halves of the city, mutually dependent on one another for over 150 years. Because of the wear and tear caused by motor vehicles, all steel parts had to be replaced in 1914/15. The bridge was blown up by the Germans towards the end of the Second World War. The Red Army took the city after a savage two month seige, by the end of which all that was left of the bridge was its two piers.

The book I am reviewing gives all the information on the history of the bridge in greater detail, and more. It is a collection of papers on cultural and technological history by British and Hungarian authors, and this, like the bridge itself, links Britain and Hungary. Chapter 1 is about the temporary bridges and the birth and development of the idea of a permanent bridge, including all the legal and organizational obstacles, with special emphasis on the role of István Széchenyi. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the existent cultural links between Great Britain and Hungary at the time, while the next article is a portrait of Tierney Clark. The next two are about Adam Clark and other "lad o'pairts", as young, travelled Scotsmen were referred to. They are supplemented by excerpts from his letters to his parents, and commentaries. Then follows a professional paper for those interested in the technical history on the construction and several reconstructions of the bridge. The last two articles place the bridge in the context of art history as an architectural achieve-


BENCE KÉPESSY

*Miklós Barabás, Frigyes Walzer:* William Tierney Clark and the Chain Bridge, *1840. Historical Portrait Archives of the Hungarian National Museum.*



Ágnes Bakos and Bence Tihanyi

*Alajos Fuchsthaller:* A View of Pest, *1846.*

ment, in the context of its age and its surroundings, and deal with its many representations in painting since the middle of the last century.

The production and appearance of the book is worthy of praise too. Even its cover feels good in one's hand. Obviously, it is richly illustrated, predominantly with graphic and photographic images of the Chain Bridge itself, including its plans. The book features portraits of all the major personages mentioned, including a respectful rather than mocking caricature of Széchenyi, as well as numerous old cityscapes and maps. There is a picture of the bridge's inspiration, Hammersmith Bridge in London. But this is more than just a book that is pleasant to look at: it is also a scholary piece of work, with plenty of footnotes to support its data. What makes it

*Photo Archives of the Budapest Historical Museum.*

even more significant is the fact that it is the very first book to appear in English on the Chain Bridge—one of the great architectural achievements of its age, though little known outside Central Europe.

Remarkably enough, Géza Hajós, the renowned art historian, whose idea the book was, is a descendant of Adam Clark —little wonder he starts his introduction with the words:

The offspring of Adam Clark became involved in a most active correspondence in the wake of a personal investigation which came about by accident, led from Edinburgh through Australia as far as Budapest and finally they even met in a small cemetery in Scotland. It was this romantic reunion and the more intimate family relationships which emerged that launched the history of this book on the Chain Bridge, which has its 150th birthday celebrated in 1999, and on its creator. ❧

Jenő Thassy

# The Bad War

Cecil D. Eby: *Hungary at War. Civilians and Soldiers in World War II.*
The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998. 313 pp.

Cecil D. Eby, following his retirement as Professor of English at the University of Michigan, has taken on what must have been his most arduous task. To do so he spent eighteen months in Budapest and Szeged. With what was only a rudimentary knowledge of Hungarian, he interviewed nearly a hundred men and women who had participated in the war or had had to endure it. It should be said he was most fortunate in his choice of interpreter and facilitators to produce this mosaic of Hungary at war.

Interestingly, his preface acknowledges that, of the many works he read up on the period, "foremost... was C.A. Macartney's *October Fifteenth*... the authoritative account of Hungarian history between 1918 and 1945." Many of us remember Professor Macartney's English-accented Hungarian coming over on the BBC during the war years. When I offered him a cup of tea in my New York apartment in the 1960s, he sniffed at it and asked me if I could give him a *fröccs* (wine and soda water): such was his identification with the country he had devoted his professional life to.

So what induced another professor to focus on Hungary? He explains that he wished to produce an account that would record and analyse the experiences of "ordinary" people, to focus on domestic, not military history. He points out that Hungarian culture and history have been neglected by mainstream Anglo-Americans and the Communist years added to this isolation. ("Thus it comes as no surprise to learn that at the end of the war, when Hungarian fliers stranded in Austria tried to surrender to the American army, they had to explain to MPs that the United States and Hungary had officially been at war.") The very unfamiliarity of the country required from the author much more in the way of historical description than in, say, Studs Terkel's *The Good War*, that classic of the oral history genre dealing with Americans' experience of the same war. As he puts it: "Necessarily more exposition was required on my part than for more familiar topics falling within the 'oral history genre'. (For Hungarians of that generation the genus of 'good war' does not exist.) In my view and by my

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***Jenő Thassy,***
*a lieutenant in the Royal Hungarian Army during the war and a member of the resistance movement, left the country in 1947 and eventually settled in the US, where he is still active in the Hungarian section of The Voice of America. His two-volume autobiography, published recently, was a huge success.*

intent, it is less 'oral history' than reportage."

To set a background against which the reader can place the interviews ("the heart of the matter") the author sketches out a succinct history of inter-war Hungary, its trauma of the loss of territory and population at Trianon, its alignment with Nazi Germany, its internal conflicts, its slow slide into war and Horthy's ambiguous and ineffective signals towards the Western powers.

With the context thus set, the interviews open with the section Soldiers, with more than a dozen individuals narrating their war. A good one it was certainly not. One of them, Gyula Sághy, was a bank clerk recalled to the colours in March 1942 and sent to Russia as a member of Horthy's hastily improvised Second Army. At Christmas of that year his unit was resting on the Don when a German woman told them that Paulus and the German Sixth Army were surrounded and would have to surrender. She also told them that the Russians would eventually overrun Hungary and impose a Communist regime on the country. He thought all this was the ravings of a mad woman. When they returned to the line, the Italians on their right had broken, their weapons had frozen up and were useless. They reported in every four hours by radio. On January 10 there was no response—headquarters had ceased to exist.

Sághy's twelve man squad eventually struggled back to Kiev, where he was discharged with a paper indicating that he would never be called up again and resumed work at his bank. When the Russians came and were randomly shipping off people to work as slave labour in the Soviet Union, Sághy was one of the unfortunates to be rounded up. However, he was put under the charge of a woman soldier who forced him to have sex with her and turned him loose. He stayed in hiding for several months before daring to return to Budapest and resume his pleasantly dull work at the bank.

Other survivors of the annihilation of the Second Hungarian Army on the Don give their stories. The picture is of the chaos of retreat, of the will (and good fortune) to survive. Of starving men learning to eat the undigested grain in goat droppings, learning that to halt was fatal, men froze to death or succumbed to frostbite. Sometimes the stories of the aftermath can be equally revealing. One interviewee, wandering abroad in Austria with his entire family after the war, decided against returning to Hungary (the ever-present fear of being hauled off for "a little work" in Russia) describes how his grandfather refused to consider going to Australia—he would not live among "savages".

For the next section, Jews, Professor Eby again sets the context of a Hungary in which Hungarian Jews were "more fervently Magyar than the Magyars themselves". During the census of 1910, 77 per cent of the Jews living in Hungary listed their nationality as Hungarian, probably, as he observes, a rough measure of their assimilation. Not all that unreasonable when one considers that, like other Central Europeans, the Hungarians were such an amalgam of Magyar, Slovakian, Serbian, Austrian, Romanian and other hybrid stock that picking out a purely Magyar bloodline was virtually impossible. But with the reduction of the country by Trianon and the disproportionate role Jews played in Béla Kun's Bolshevist regime in 1919, Jews had become visible. As early as 1920, a Numerus Clausus law was passed, limiting the percentage of Jewish students enrolled in the universities to the proportion of Jews in the total population. Hungary thus had the dubious distinction of being the first country in Europe to pass legislation

that attempted to limit the Jews in public life. (No matter that the law was often simply ignored.) The interviews reflect the ambiguity of Horthy's Hungary: anti-Jewish legislation but no extermination camps, official discrimination but a measure of safety, until the German occupation of 1945, when the safe haven became an assembly line of hell and the transports shuttled off 450,000 to their deaths in under two months. Thus Endre Sásdi was called up twice as a reserve officer for the occupation of Ruthenia following the First Vienna Award (1939), and of Transylvania following the Second (1940); in the summer of 1942 he found himself stripped of his rank and called up into one of the notorious Labour Batallions and sent to the Don. Caught up in the debacle after Stalingrad, he was one of the few who survived the retreat and subsequent typhus. In Spring 1944 he was sent back to Budapest and given twenty-four hours leave. (Estimates of deaths in the Labour Batallions serving on the Russian front run as high as 42 thousand, almost the same figure for all British and British Empire military casualties up to June 1944.) Using connections, he resumed his job as a highly skilled foundry worker, entered into a suicide pact with his wife when the Germans occupied the country in March 1944 (she died, he didn't), went into hiding in October and awaited the Red Army, joined one of the eight divisions raised by the Red Army in Hungary, was demobbed in Austria.

The accounts show the haphazardness of survival: a father with a First World War military disability pension meant that Judit Herceg did not have to remove herself to the ghetto or wear the yellow star. Zsuzsa Merényi, then in ballet school, was taken to the City Park in October 1944 by her mother to be informed that the family was Jewish on both sides. At this news she and her sister laughed outright—it was so grotesque and inconceivable. She even made a joke out of it: "Fortunately we have never been anti-Semitic!"

It is the quality of unreality that comes across again and again. In the section Fliers one is struck by the memories of that last golden summer at Lake Balaton, when a fighter pilot's wings brought entry into the summer houses of the rich and aristocratic. The Royal Hungarian Airforce had adopted a live-and-let-live attitude towards the American and British bombers overflying Hungary. (Until the arrival of Messerschmidt 109 Gs,—the Gustav—no Hungarian aircraft had the operational ceiling of the Liberators and Flying Fortresses high overhead.) When the Germans occupied the country in March 1944, Hungary became a target for them and the delight in flying their new Me 109s was tempered by the fact that for most of that year they were in action against the Western Allies. Yet despite the massive bombing of Hungarian cities and installations, for the carefully groomed Magyar pilots it remained a gentleman's war with an inviolate chivalric code. Nearly all have stories of friendly exchanges with American airmen. Against the Soviets it was a savage battle for survival with no holds barred. Varied too was post-war Hungarian officialdom's treatment of the fliers. Some were ignored, some actively persecuted. Much depended on the whim of a tribunal or the passion of a prosecutor.

Unreality too is a feature of the section on Players, where the cast includes the Volksdeutsche, an aristocrat, diplomats (including a colleague of Raoul Wallenberg's at the Swedish legation), an Arrow Cross member and an ex-gendarme. The very variety here may weaken the focus but it contributes to the broad canvass the book gives of this Hungary.

The book concludes with Siege and Liberation, the horrendous memories of Budapest's seven-week agony and the shock of Soviet liberation. This is the fitting crescendo to a book written by an American academic who had the courage and vitality to embark on the Herculean task of re-telling Hungary's complicated war and misfortunes. He chose his guides judiciously and what shines through these 311 pages of skilfully integrated oral testimony and historical exposition is the author's sympathy for a nation buffetted by forces beyond its capacity to control. ❧

SÁNDOR DOMANOVSZKY

*The Chain Bridge, a symbol of Budapest.*

# Bartók's Method of Composition

## László Somfai Talks to László Győri

*Originally written in English and published in the United States under the title* Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources *(Berkeley University of California Press, 1996), László Somfai's book has now been made available to the Hungarian reader by the publishing company Accord. The director of the Bartók Archive reveals that as a visiting professor at Berkeley University he discovered what musicians and musicologists had failed to grasp in Bartók's music. The book has been written for those in the profession who are open to Bartók's music but do not know enough about the composer.*

While teaching in the United States, I made the shocking discovery that although I had been studing Bartók for about three decades, I still had no access to many of the manuscripts. In 1989, with Péter Bartók's help, photocopies of all the Bartók manuscripts held in the United States were made available to researchers in Hungary. On top of that, I had the good fortune to go through the complete material of Péter Bartók's private archive in Florida. Somewhere in the book I've said that I am the lucky man who knows the Bartók manuscripts and documents perhaps better than anybody else in the world. This might sound presumptuous but it is true. By another stroke of luck, my other scholarly interest has been 18th-century music, which helps me a great deal in finding answers to many questions. Through reconstructing the compositional method, we now know which manuscripts might have been lost. We also have a clear idea of how Bartók composed his works. He improvised a great deal at the piano; this can explain much, including many things that nobody would have dared to write down since the necessary perspective was lacking, as everybody could only see a certain segment of the oeuvre and that through a narrow window.

*You have applied the methods developed for research into early music to the works of a 20th-century composer. There were no recordings in Mozart and Haydn's time, and what survived of the sources was a matter of chance.*

I believe that research into and the performance of early and classical music should also inspire students of 20th-century music. Here is one example: 20th-century music sheets are no longer on watermarked paper, but a careful examination of the staff lines could provide just as much in-

***László Győri***
*is a journalist on the staff of the Music Section of Hungarian Radio.*

formation as watermarks in Bach or Haydn's age. When working with methods as accurate as those for research into Bach, important discoveries can be made regarding the micro-chronology of an opus or the gradual development of a concept. The greatest finding brought by paper research concerned the 4th String Quartet—this was the first completely symmetrical five-part composition in Bartók's oeuvre. It turned out that the composer had already considered the four-part version complete, he had already written up a fair copy, when he decided to add a fifth movement, which is now movement four, thus making the compositional structure symmetrical. It can be studied *in statu nascendi,* how a composer reaches a crucial discovery. In Bartók's case we have many more documents than in the case of old composers. In many ways this can add to the problems of musicologists, too. At a conference on classical music held in Jerusalem a few years ago, I was the only one who spoke on a twentieth-century topic. Nevertheless, everyone understood immediately why I had chosen it, since the perspective of three-quarters of a century is already sufficiently long to make it difficult to fathom how the composer envisaged the ideal rendering of his piece. Fortunately, in Bartók's case we do have a few recordings he himself made. With the proper method, a combined study of the written music and the recording can help us establish what the musical notation might have meant to the composer and why it could have meant something different to the rest of us. Professor Brinkmann wrote of my book that it should set the standard for other studies on 20th-century music. It may sound immodest but I, too, believe that— through the work of many generations of Bartók scholars—Bartók research surpasses that into Stravinsky, Webern or Schönberg in many respects.

*Bartók did not really show his cards, he revealed very little about his music. Apart from a few minor instances, he was unwilling to teach composition, and in what he set down on paper there is not much about his intentions. Alongside the drafts of his Harvard lectures and a few papers, the sources documenting the birth of a composition are the best guidance available. In Bartók's case these provide clues to his intentions, whereas other composers are willing to discuss theirs at length.*

It can be documented that in several instances Bartók crossed out or omitted from his lectures items that might have revealed something about the non-musical message of his compositions. My colleague Tibor Tallián pointed out that Bartók's method was akin to the word-processing techniques of the computer age: he retrieved and re-edited his earlier stuff so that he could reuse it elsewhere. Bartók kept some of his idiosyncrasies all his life. In his case, as with the greatest artists, considerations of chronology are vital. They are vital not only to enable us to determine the actual order of the works, but also to clarify his motives. In one of my earlier essays I wrote about the long and frequently cited passage from his *Autobiography,* in which Bartók explained why Liszt's music had been so important to him, even more important than Wagner's. This passage did not appear in the first, 1918, version of the piece. But after the First World War people began to bracket him together with Wagner, Richard Strauss and Schönberg, seeing him as someone following the same direction. Bartók did not agree, and his reference to Liszt was probably in consequence of that. Unless we know what drove the composer to make such a pointed comment, we are likely to get the wrong picture. Only in 1943, in the Harvard lectures, did Bartók speak about his own music in front of an

audience of musicians. He found himself in a very peculiar situation: in the United States his music was declared to be "bitonal", and various labels were put on it. In the Harvard lectures he was in a way reacting to these labels—somewhat overemphasising his points. One should bear this in mind at all times when one is reading Bartók's writings. Bartók did not want what a composer said to stand between his music and the audience. He did not wish to help and direct listeners. He believed that if the piece could not stand on its own, then nothing would remedy that. Today it is quite natural that composers expound their views in concert guides and in scholarly works, explaining such things as why they wrote what they wrote, how they work, and what the composition's structure is. They produce highly analitical and convincing essays, but sometimes these bear no resemblance to the original composition. This was completely out of character for Bartók. All that mattered to him was that performers render his compositions well in the concert hall. He never aspired to impress the audience of modern music festivals; he preferred that his works be played in normal concerts, together with the symphonies of, say, Beethoven and Brahms. Although I did not mention this in my book, I feel that if there is anything that is lacking in Bartók's oeuvre, it is piano pieces of many movements and larger format. His piano music mostly consists of tiny pieces, shorter than sonatas, not necessarily to be played in series. Piano Sonata (1926) and Suite op. 14 are, of course, exceptions, but Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs, for example, fails to have the same effect that a Prokofiev sonata would. Some years ago András Schiff played three of his favourite masterpieces of a larger format: Bach's Partita in D Major, Bartók's Piano Sonata, and Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata. There is no other Bartók composition that could have stood its ground in such company.

*To claim that Bartók had no intention of providing a bridge between his works and the audience seems to be at variance with the fact that Bartók himself was a performing artist. Also, he attended the rehearsals of his compositions and could be a very severe critic at times.*

My book does not end with the nine chapters devoted to the sources, but continues with a lengthy tenth, in which I discuss Bartók interpretation. I firmly believe that all through his life Bartók never looked on his works as finished pieces. He continued to work on them until the very last moment, and his intention was to make sure that the performer understood everything he put on paper. It is perhaps not widely known that for quite some time Bartók was under the false impression that musicians were reading his instructions precisely as he had meant them to be read. He was in for an unpleasant surprise in this respect. His first disappointment came when, as a young teacher, he edited Bach's *Wohltemperiertes Klavier*. Later he was forced to re-edit the first two booklets with much more detailed instructions. The reason for this was not that he had changed his mind in the meantime; rather, he found that his colleagues and pupils—all from the Academy of Music where he taught—interpreted the musical notation he had used differently from its intended meaning. Later on he had to discover that foreign artists also had difficulties interpreting the notation of his works. By the end of the 1930s his dismay reached a point where he asked Universal Edition to insert a note into the reprint of Suite op. 14 and *Allegro barbaro* saying that for an authentic interpretation of the music people should refer to Béla Bartók's recording of the pieces by HMV. In other words, he advised the

performers to listen to his recording. Few people would realise what a tragic decision this must have been on Bartók's part: to discover relatively late in life that important aspects of his music, with a crucial bearing on the pieces' overall character—could not be captured on paper. This realisation later came to have consequences for his method of composition. Musicians know that the young Bartók frequently used the instruction *rubato,* and that this instruction is almost completely absent from *Microcosmos*. The reason is not that there are fewer parts in *Microcosmos* that require a freer rhythmical interpretation; rather, Bartók discovered that musicians all over the world interpreted this instruction differently from the way he did. He was willing to make a compromise and write *espressivo,* or use other methods to indicate the performance he was thinking of. Initially he placed a greater trust in the performers' instincts, but when he saw that the performance might suffer, the musical notation of Bartók's compositions became more spare. It is worth asking ourselves whether this affected his music also. My answer is: probably yes.

*This seems to support the view that, had he known it, Bartók would have agreed to the inclusion of the "scores" of his recordings in the complete edition of his works. Still, would this not mean that he, and his recordings, would stand between his compositions and the performing artists? Isn't this encouraging the emergence of cloned Bartók interpretations?*

The use of audio material is not part of the training at conservatoires and academies. A mediocre musician usually listens to a few famous recordings of, say, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, before developing his "own" interpretation, but we are not talking here about mediocre artists. By contrast, good musicians are averse to the idea of regarding such recordings as "authentic" documents. Does it really help to publish original recordings? For numerous reasons I am a pessimist. The 1981 compilation of all of Bartók's recordings on an LP, followed by a CD version later, was a real eye-opener for several excellent musicians, but these are probably not used in most of the conservatoires. On the other hand, those pianists who made a breakthrough in interpreting Bartók's music, Zoltán Kocsis or András Schiff, for example, all relied extensively on these authentic recordings, and that gives us reasons to be more optimistic. But not only the pianists do that. Take the stunningly talented young violinist Gil Shaham, who recorded the Violin Concerto recently with Boulez; he had carefully studied the recording of the world premiere with Zoltán Székely. He discovered a discrepancy between the musical notation and what was recorded at the world premiere (conducted by Willem Mengelberg). It made sense to use the "authentic" recording as a supplementary document to the written music. Naturally, string quartet teachers now realise why it is helpful to make their students listen to the old recordings of some of the string quartets, the Hungarian Quartet, for example. But to return to Bartók's music and the danger of cloning: Zoltán Kocsis listed numerous reasons why it was simply impossible to imitate Bartók. Although he used a different technique, not what is now usual. Bartók's technical virtuosity was amazing. We can try to emulate his rubatos and accentuations without the risk of surrendering our own personality. By the way, it should be noted that although in some cases we have two, three, or even four versions of his recordings, we won't find any two Bartók interpretations that are identical.

*At one point Bartók got stuck in his composition and drew a piglet between the staff lines. This, of course, is not included*

*in any of the editions, yet a detail like this provides us with clues about the truly intimate moments in a composer's life.*

On seeing such drawings scribbled down in moments of exhaustion we must remind ourselves of what we tend to forget, namely that Bartók rarely composed on a regular basis. His daily routine was entirely different: he gave piano lessons, practised, gave concerts, collected folk music, transcribed his phonographic recordings, or was engaged in a comparative analysis of melodies. All through these periods ideas were continuously swarming in his head, but he would only sit down to his piano when he had something ready. The music sheets capture the yield of those blessed and agonising days, when he finally dragged himself away from his daily routine and devoted himself seriously to composition. The letter he wrote to his wife, Ditta, in the summer of 1926, is often quoted from. In this letter he described, almost in an apologetic tone, how he usually composed. To avoid all distractions, he sent everyone away from the house. He could not really get going in the morning; he got into his stride only in the afternoon. But then he could not stop in the evening: he went on working all night, sometimes even jumping out of bed in the middle of the night when a new idea occurred to him. It is almost as if we were reading a description in an autobiographical novel from Berlioz's age. But the manuscripts themselves help cast light on a number of exciting and beautiful moments. Certain parts clearly show that although he was already at the end of his tether for that day, he continued toiling over his composition, occasionally switching from pen to pencil, knowing that whatever he wrote down would not be final. Researchers greatly benefit from the fact that Bartók was a frugal man who used every square inch of the music sheet; this can help establish the chronology or the direct source of his inspiration. A careful study of the manuscripts is a kind of initiation: one can at least have some idea of how Bartók *worked.* As to how he *created,* we shall never know that. ❧

János Kárpáti

# Bartók's Words —Bartók's Thoughts

András Wilheim, ed.: *Beszélgetések Bartókkal. Nyilatkozatok, interjúk 1911–1945.* (Conversations with Bartók. Statements, Interviews 1911–1945). Budapest, Kijárat Kiadó, 2000, 235 pp.

The custom today is to record interviews on tape, with the interviewees usually getting a chance to approve the final version before it goes into print. It can be argued, therefore, that these interviews are more reliable than the conversations journalists conducted some sixty or eighty years ago. However, today's technology is needed only by mediocre reporters. A receptive interviewer who was knowledgeable on the subject could produce authentic interviews even back then. This is one of the lessons of András Wilhelm's recently published compilation of a wide variety of interviews, ranging from cheap journalism through dedicated attempts at interpretation right down to some auto-analyses of scholarly depth.

Just as wide-ranging as the reporters and journalists interviewing Bartók are the type of interviews included in the book. A good interview is a genuine dialogue, in which the interviewer, through precisely formulated questions, creates the opportunity for the interviewee to reply in an authentic and articulated way. In addition, the book contains several articles where the dialogue format is dropped and the ideas emerging from the "conversation" are presented as continuous texts, some of an analytical nature. And, finally, there are pieces that have been included in the book mainly for their newsworthiness, being concerned with an event, such as a première or a journey, without containing any actual "conversation".

Zeneműkiadó published a similar compilation back in 1957. Károly Kristóf, who had written critical reviews for *Ma Este, Pesti Napló* and *Az Est,* provided a selection from his own publications, mostly comprised of brief questions and replies as well as straight news, rather than actual interviews. Nevertheless, we must give credit to Kristóf, as this small volume of some two hundred pieces shows that a Hungarian journalist had faithfully covered Bartók's career between 1924 and 1940, and felt it to be his duty to popularize the composer even among the readers of the tabloid press. He even demonstrated a

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certain amount of courage when, in his own way, he tried to defend Bartók at the time of the ignoble attacks against him (Petranu, Greguss Award).[1]

András Benkő published forty pieces under the title "Romániában megjelent Bartók-interjúk" (Bartók Interviews Published in Romania). Complete with notes and extensive commentary and showing a high level of scholarship, the interviews formed part of the book *Bartók-dolgozatok 1981* (Ferenc László ed.: Bartók Essays 1981, Bucharest, Kriterion, 1982). In comparison to Kristóf's selection, the standard of these interviews was generally high; nevertheless, these, too, contained instances of false information and tendentious interpretation. All the same, this book offered convincing evidence that the Transylvanian milieu reciprocated the composer's artistic and scholarly attention with special affection and care.

In his comprehensive documentary series, János Demény also published a large number of printed conversations with Bartók, which came out in the three volumes of *Zenetudományi Tanulmányok* (Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha eds.: Essays in Musicology; Vol. III. Budapest, Akadémia Kiadó 1955; Vol. VII. Budapest, Akadémia Kiadó 1959; Vol. X. Budapest, Akadémia Kiadó, 1962). He classified the publications according to types: concert programmes, critical reviews, newspaper articles and, quite naturally, interviews. Now we can discover once again how fundamental and literally indispensable Demény's series has been for those studying Bartók's oeuvre.

Had András Wilheim's aim been nothing more than to compile valuable earlier publications, his selection would have still been an important work, in view of the fact that these can now be found only in libraries. *Beszélgetések Bartókkal* has augmented the inventory of Bartók interviews with nearly fifty items that have never been reprinted since their first publication.

Before commenting on some of the typical interviews presented in the book, a point needs to be made which the editor emphasised in his postscript: due to its intrinsic property, an interview cannot be regarded as an authentic Bartók text. "...Although he is the main character, he is always made dependent on something else, on the interpretation and knowledge, or superficiality and bias, of somebody else."[2] That adds to the publisher's responsibility, and also warrants careful consideration on the readers' part.

András Wilheim's compilation merits special praise for re-publishing several of Bartók's important statements, for the first time ever making available to a Hungarian-speaking readership interviews and statements which originally appeared in newspapers in Stockholm, Amsterdam, Prague, Paris, Boston and London. For the first time we can read in full the report on Russia published in the musical review *Zenei Szemle* of Temesvár (Timişoara). For obvious reasons, Bartók's description of the appalling conditions prevailing in the Soviet Union, given in an interview to Aladár Tóth, had to be edited out of the *Bartók Breviárium* (Bartók Breviary),[3] published first in 1958 and again in 1974. (It is rather unfortunate, however, that Wilheim has failed to mention the censored re-publication of it.) We quote a few excerpts from the report so as to demonstrate how well Bartók perceived the situation, how deeply he felt the problems there:

> What strikes the eye first is the complete chaos and confusion that dominates both the concert scene and concert management... The same mayhem reigns in the entire Russian music politics. The concert agencies invite a large number of foreign artists, but they are unable to pay their fees... The passport misery is beyond belief:

it is almost impossible for a Russian citizen to obtain a passport... It is quite probable that the entire (concert) audience come from the ranks of the old, impoverished and downtrodden Russian middle class... I came to form a vague idea of how much suffering this old middle class had gone through only when I met the representatives of Russian musicology... It was very moving to see the enthusiasm and the fine results these scholars could produce—and under what financial conditions! The disturbing conditions of the professional people could be felt here in their entire gravity. They live on a miserable salary. No one can talk freely in front of others... The living conditions are appalling...[4]

Frank Whitaker of *The Musical Times*, who visited the composer in his home in Buda, gave a detailed account of their encounter in the March 1, 1926 issue of the magazine.[5] Although only a few sentences of the dialogue are actually quoted, Whitaker's words faithfully reflect Bartók's ideas, mainly concerning the collection of folk music and his assessment of contemporary musicians. Another article, hitherto accessible only in English, allows a glimpse into Bartók's compositional technique. The correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor* of Boston formulated his questions in a decidedly journalistic way, yet he wrote up the answers authentically and concisely. For example:

> There are those who imagine that European art is on the decline. Regarding music, I am not of that sad opinion. I go ahead. Moreover, I proceed independently. Schönberg and his 12-tone music is foreign to me. Schönberg nevertheless both seeks and finds. I take as the basis of composing, folksong. That gets me away from the 19th century and romanticism, from which escape for many is so difficult. One means of freedom I find in the employment of tone clusters. But I always retain certain centers of tone, which give the effect of key. Suppose my key note to be c#; you cannot say the music is in minor or in major, inasmuch as my chord of C# will contain both the minor and the major third.[6]

And all this in 1927, sixteen years before the Harvard lectures!

The person of the interviewer and interpreter is also very important. So far we have only mentioned competent journalists and discerning critics. However, some of András Wilheim's publications also feature prominent theoreticians of 20th-century music, such as Michel Dimitri Calvocoressi and Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt. Calvocoressi, the French critic and writer of Greek origin, is known to have been a close friend of Bartók's. In March 1929 it was he who informed the readers of the London *Daily Telegraph* of the Hungarian composer's compositional ideas.

> It is true that my present tendency is to refrain from entrusting broad, sustained melodies to the piano. I aim, rather, at using short phrases interwoven into a polyphonic texture. As a consequence, cadences become unobtrusive; they are bridged over by contrapuntal devices. Of course, I proceed otherwise when writing for bow instruments which by nature lend themselves so well to sustained melody. But even then you may have noticed that the first movement of my fourth String Quartet is, in texture, very similar to the second movement of my piano sonata.[7]

In 1938, the German critic Stuckenschmidt completed an interview with Bartók for the *Prager Tagblatt*. Stuckenschmidt, who at the age of 37 had already earned Europe-wide recognition, was evidently less interested in the technical aspects and was more intent on drawing a graphic picture of the Hungarian composer.

> Ten years had passed since we last saw each other. His slim and almost boyish figure now seems even more fragile. The hair above the aristocratic face carved out of marble is entirely white now. But his eyes continue to sparkle with the old, majestic

fire. There is something Promethean in his gaze, suggesting an unconditional quest for truth and purity.... Bartók is a reserved man: not a single breath of a hostile atmosphere of alien spirits can penetrate his strict yet splendid world. Nevertheless, the barriers are gradually lifted: we talk about common friends, about contemporary German and Czech composers, whose work Bartók holds in high esteem...[8]

Sophie Török's interview, published in *Pesti Napló* on December 13, 1936, provides important background information bearing on Bartók's ethnomusicological field-work in Turkey. Similarly to Dezső Kosztolányi's frequently referred to interview, here too we can appreciate the interpretation of a dedicated writer: the text is also useful from the viewpoint of scholarship, since Bartók has something to say about the analysis of Turkish folk songs:

It is well known that our old Hungarian tunes characteristically start with the high tones, quite often with the high octave itself. The tune reaches the closing note, the lower octave, only near the end, or right at the end. The Turkish tunes start even higher, possibly at the top tenth, proceeding from there towards the fundamental tone...[9]

Finally, I would like to mention Dénes Bartha's outstanding piece. It was he who published an interview in the German-language Budapest paper, *Pester Lloyd,* in March 1940, about Bartók's plans in the United States. It should also be noted that numerous American interviews in András Wilheim's book provide a detailed account of Bartók's last five years, relying to some degree on the work of Tibor Tallián (*Bartók fogadtatása Amerikában 1940–1945*—Bartók's Reception in America, Budapest, Zeneműkiadó, 1988) but also using various re-publications.

Wilheim keeps his notes very short, which was a deliberate decision on his part according to his postscript. " ...I did not check the correctness of references to Bartók's journey and planned concerts (those who are interested should consult the books mentioned above by János Demény and Tibor Tallián, along with Béla Bartók Jr.'s *Bartók Béla életének krónikája* (The Chronicle of Béla Bartók's Life) Budapest, Zeneműkiadó, 1981)," the editor writes, and it is quite understandable that he chose not to "compete" with András Benkő, who supplemented the forty publications with a comparative source list along with other kinds of information.[10] However, there were a few inaccuracies that would have called for immediate correction, as readers should not be expected to be able to look up sources not readily available.

Although students of Bartók's oeuvre still have their work cut out, a number of comprehensive studies are now in the making. László Somfai's latest book (*Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts and Autograph Sources,* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996. Hungarian version: *Bartók Béla kompozíciós módszere,* Budapest, Akkord, 2000) clarified matters regarding the research into sources, and the methodology of the complete edition —already far behind schedule—is now taking shape. Thanks to Somfai, again, a new list of works is under preparation, which will replace the Szöllősy list. Work on a critical edition of Bartók's writings has been going on, but progress is slow and therefore András Szöllősy's *Bartók összegyűjtött írásai* (Bartók's Collected Writings) will continue to be in demand for some time still. András Wilheim's present book is another step towards a complete edition of Bartók's interviews, without claiming to be a definitive work. It is still important in the newest Bartók literature, because in a single book it offers the readers "a collection of non-authentic Bartók texts."[11] ❧

# NOTES

1 ■ Letter to the Kisfaludy Society, *Népszava* January 3, 1936. Answer to the Petranu Attack, *Ungarische Jahrbücher* (Berlin) February 1936. Both published in English: *Béla Bartók Essays*. Selected and Edited by Benjamin Suchoff. London, Faber & Faber, 1976, Nos. 31, 32.

2 ■ Postscript, p. 227.

3 ■ Levelek, írások, dokumentumok (Letters, Writings, Documents). Compiled by József Újfalussy.

4 ■ No. 69, pp. 111–113.

5 ■ No. 143.

6 ■ No. 58, p. 96.

7 ■ No. 67, p. 109.

8 ■ No. 108, p. 187.

9 ■ No. 100, p. 175.

10 ■ No. 229.

11 ■ Postscript, p. 227.l

*The Chain Bridge was blown up by the Germans during the siege of Budapest in 1945. One of its lions can be recognized among the debris on the Pest side. Photo Archives of the Budapest Historical Museum.*

Margaret McLay

# Three Recent Works by György Kurtág

## Aspects of Settings of Texts by Lichtenberg, Hölderlin and Beckett

Looking at Kurtág's oeuvre as a whole, the wide choice of literary sources and the apt settings of words are established features. With Kurtág the skill at word-setting extends to several languages. As an educated Hungarian from Transylvania, he speaks Hungarian, Romanian (and hence Italian), and German. To which he added later studies of French, English and Russian. His knowledge of the literature of many countries is astonishing. He was a central figure in Budapest musical life holding sessions at his flat for young musicians and others, during which not only musical scores were analysed, but also works of literature: sessions on Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* were particularly influential.

Kurtág's music is imbued, too, with the love of musical puzzles—some obvious, others well-hidden, some humorous, others serious, bringing to mind the second motto which prefaces the *Péter Bornemisza* Concerto: "...Some will smile at them, some will shudder at them, some will find little in them, others will take several meanings from them..." As early as the Opus 1 String Quartet, there is a double pun in the fifth movement. This is an ostinato and Kurtág directs it to be played "molto ostinato". The first violin part resembles mule-like braying in the opening bars. Joyce's influence in the multi-language pun can be seen in another reference to the donkey family, in number 9 of the Twelve New Microludes from book 3 of *Játékok* (*Games,* the collection of pieces designed to introduce young children to playing the piano) which is called "A konok *Ász*" ("Stubborn Ab); of course "Ász" sounds like "ass" in English. There are also "musical rebuses" as in the petal-like duration signs in the third section of the third movement of the *Bornemisza* Concerto, Opus 7, to the words "Virág az ember" ("man is as a flower").

These traits are well demonstrated in three recent works, the Hölderlin-Gesänge, Opus 35 (in progress), ... *pas à pas —nulle part...,* Opus 36 (1993–98), to poems by Samuel Beckett in French and English, and *Einige Sätze aus den Sudelbüchern Georg Christoph Lichtenbergs,* Opus 37 (1996). Only the last of these works is published to date. The Hölderlin settings are described as a work in progress, and there are differences between the manuscript score of the Beckett set-

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tings and the tape of the World Premiere. The observations made in this paper, therefore, bear this in mind.

## Einige Sätze aus den Sudelbüchern Georg Christoph Lichtenbergs, for solo soprano

As the Lichtenberg settings are published and therefore in a more finalized form, it is sensible to consider this work first. Kurtág writes that this is not a song cycle; the singer is, rather, free to choose which songs to perform and in what order. There is something almost improvisatory about the work, which is added to by the choice given to the performer.

Moreover, singers can opt to perform some of the items with instruments: the Appendix contains arrangements of some of the songs for Trumpet(s), Horn or Double Bass. Kurtág also suggests that it is not necessary to choose a large number of the songs: five or six may be enough. Typically, the intensity of his expression makes an impact with only a few numbers. The items can also be performed in other contexts with other works, perhaps with the music of other composers. It is also possible to perform a song more than once in the same performance, allowing different perspectives on it each time. One is reminded of the concerts held by the composers of the New Music Studio in Budapest in the 70's and 80's, which contained much experimental music by composers from different countries as well as from Hungary. Kurtág influenced and inspired these younger composers, and was in turn interested in many of the developments presented at these concerts. The idea of giving the performer this choice is, however, an interesting development for Kurtág who has a very precise idea of how he wishes his works to be performed, right down to the timbre of the individual voice he feels best suits each composition. The idea of choosing a cycle of pieces from a larger oeuvre may well have come from performing selections from *Játékok*, sometimes with music by other composers. Although Kurtág has described *Játékok* as "litter"[1] the writing down of any musical idea which came to him, even if it was someone else's, has helped to stimulate his compositional flow, and has provided him with a source of material for more "serious" compositions. This freedom now appears to have extended to a certain latitude for the performer, too.

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–99) was a German physicist who lectured at the University of Göttingen. He is not remembered much for his physics, but rather for his witty aphorisms, which have been published in several languages. "Sudeln" means "to scribble", "daub", "mess about". The word "Sudelbuch" therefore could mean "book of scribbles" or "book of rubbish". Kurtág may well have been amused by the apparent connection with this title and his own description of *Játékok*. Kurtág became acquainted with Lichtenberg's work during a stay at the Wirtschaftskolleg zu Berlin, where the dedicatees of the work, Professor Wolf and Annette Lepenies entertained him after dinner with selections from the aphorisms.[2]

The following gives a flavour of Lichtenberg's wit:

> Whoever loves himself has at least the advantage of not having many rivals.

Other aphorisms are less humorous in intent:

1 ■ in conversation with the Author

2 ■ I am grateful to János Demény for this information

What use is the sunrise if we do not get up?

Some of the collection are not even aphorisms but are rather incomplete sayings, for instance

When our blessed cow was alive, a woman in Göttingen once said.

Most of the sayings contain a condensed profound thought. Kurtág likens one of them to a Buddhist koan:

Order leads to all that is virtuous! but what leads to order?

The match in these short sayings between Kurtág's own pithy style and wit is remarkable. Kurtág sets twenty-two aphorisms in all for solo soprano, and there is an appendix which contains the optional items for instruments: an Introduction and Epilogue plus intermezzi based on seven of the aphorisms.

Regarding the choice of items for performance, Kurtág writes that:

One should be guided in the selection and organization primarily by the contrasting and complementing of characters and keys.

The notion of "keys" is a Kurtágian one. There is the sense of a "home", or referential pitch as, for instance, in the sets of Microludes. The opening piece "The Potatoes" begins with a six-note arrangement made up of the notes either side of Eb and E which are the two final pitches. The song entitled "Touropa" ("Eurotour") is strongly based round C, opening with a fanfare-like perfect 5th figure. This association is strengthened further in the Epilogo which is based on this number, and is set appropriately for solo trumpet.

In other pieces there appears to be a less clear sense of a "home", or referential pitch. But there are clear thematic connections between some pieces, for instance "Geständnis" (Confession):

It is not the spirit but the flesh which makes a nonconformist.

is connected to the "fleshly" (in more ways than one!) aphorism "Ein Gourmand":

"The word *succulent* could be pronounced so that, when someone heard it, he might believe that he was biting into a ripe peach."

Kurtág hints at the connection in the musical settings. The words "sondern den Fleisch" (but the flesh) from "Geständnis" are arranged in a similar way to the setting of "so auszusprechen" (may be pronounced so) in "Ein Gourmand". The first three and a half bars of the instrumental *Introduzione,* too, is based on "Ein Gourmand". The character of the three movements is connected, with the directions "Mit Schwung", "Con moto", and "Con slancio" respectively, suggesting a similarly energetic approach to each. The *Introduzione* is, in Kurtág's delightfully miniaturistic way, like those opera preludes which on an altogether larger scale quote from the music which is to come. It is based largely round "Ein Gourmand" and a much shorter piece to the words "A girl scarce twelve fashions old." This latter piece is connected in subject-matter and musically to "The girls had a pair of sinfully beautiful hands."

There are some "musical rebuses". The first piece in the collection "The Potatoes" seems to have a visual aspect, in that all the notes are semibreves which look rather like potatoes, and they lie in or underneath the stave as if below the earth; the text reads: "The potatoes are lying there, and are sleeping for their resurrection." At the word "resurrection" the semibreves rise to the top of the stave.

More obvious representations are the "church towers" of "Kirchtürme" represented by widely leaping intervals. The words of this aphorism allow Kurtág the

excuse for the use of musical inversion on the word "umgekehrte" (inverted), but it is a quasi-inversion—it should not be too predictable.

Of the instrumental pieces there are five *intermezzi* between the *Introduzione,* and *Epilogo,* and alternative settings of two of the songs. One of the *intermezzi* is for double bass, as is the alternative setting of the tiny song "Ein einschläfriger Kirchstuhl" ("einschläfrig" means "single" as in "single bed" but also has connotations of the verb "einschläfern" to lull to sleep, to drug"). The double bass provides suitably hollow and drowsy harmonics to the vocal line. The other alternative setting is of the words

> The American whom Columbus discovered, made a bad discovery.

(surely, a remarkably "modern" thought for an eighteenth-century writer!) Here two trumpets are placed at a little distance on either side of the singer. The notion of seeking and discovering is conveyed by a canon. To depict the actual discovery, the trumpets play alternately in unison with the singer, whilst the unfortunate aspect of this discovery for the native American is shown in a fragmenting texture which contains more silence than notes.

The *intermezzi* include virtually unchanged versions of the vocal numbers on which they are based. With the exception of the solo trumpet, the other instruments are sparsely deployed: three are for solo trumpet, one for two trumpets, and the number based on "What use is the sunrise if we do not get up?" is a canon for two trumpets and horn. There is one intermezzo for double bass alone.

Generally the Lichtenberg settings form a humorous work with a light touch. The gentle humour highlights the more serious underlying themes and matches the character of the aphorisms most aptly.

## Hölderlin-Gesänge, Opus 35, for solo baritone

Like the Lichtenberg settings, this work is not a song-cycle in the traditional sense. To date there are thirteen numbers, one of which "Gestalt und Geist" is given five alternative accompaniments drawn from an ensemble of bass flute, clarinet, horn, trombone, tuba, violin, viola, cello and double bass. The setting of "Hälfte des Lebens" is for three baritones. From these items, a programme should be drawn up. Kurtág gives a sample suggesting seven items, and as in the Lichtenberg settings, there are correspondences between certain of the songs. This work is still in progress and, as is often the case with Kurtág, it is being compiled over a number of years. The earliest setting is a rewriting of *AN...* which first appeared in a version for Tenor and Piano as his Opus 29, in 1988-9, whilst the most recent numbers in the version of the score available to date are from 1997.

Hölderlin's poetry, imbued as it is with the Romantic spirit but also inspired by Classical Greece, is in contrast to the witty aphorisms of Lichtenberg, although only three decades separate them. Hölderlin's language is high-flown and melodic. There is an abundance of vocatives, commands and direct questions which suffuse his language with a forceful and compelling energy. Kurtág's expressive range is as suited to Hölderlin's powerful sentiment as it is to Lichtenberg's terseness, yet he does not overbalance Hölderlin's language. An example of the parity between text and music is in the setting of "Hälfte des Lebens" (Half of Life), final line: "Es klirren die Fahnen" ("the flags rattle"). Kurtág matches the dry sound of the word "klirren" with a hastily sung line dovetailed between the two lower parts, and using bare-sounding intervals of perfect and augmented 4ths.

This piece also seems to contain another of those visual representations, here of the "golden pears" of the first line shown by a suitably pear-shaped phrase mark.

The lyrical, euphonious quality of much of Hölderlin's language can be difficult to enhance with a musical setting. But Kurtág here concentrates on the darker aspects of Hölderlin, on the melancholia and mental disturbance which led to insanity. Kurtág chooses to set several of the shorter poems, a letter, and the celebrated memorial to Hölderlin by Paul Celan. There is a dark despair in many of the texts stemming from Hölderlin's feeling of alienation as the poet-mediator between "das Heilige" (the divine) and mankind. The fragment "Nun versteh' ich den Menschen erst, da ich ferne von ihm und in der Einsamkeit lebe!" ("For the first time I understand mankind now that I live far from it, in isolation") describes this state. The pain is felt, too, in the line: "Denn Kunst und Sinnen hat Schmerzen gekostet von Anbeginn" ("for art and reflection have cost pain from the beginning") from "Der Spaziergang".

The musical settings often hint at the madness which was to come to Hölderlin in his later years. A number of the songs make a feature of tortuous, usually chromatic lines, whose narrow ambit and shape suggest the struggle of the artist to reach his ideal, the increasing difficulty of making himself understood, of articulating the divine message, of articulating at all. This is particularly apposite for Kurtág who finds composition so demanding, that even the shortest utterance takes effort. An atmosphere of bleakness prevails. The first song, "Im Walde" (In the forest) contrasts "noble nature" (du edles Wild) using an opening out wedge figure, with man concealing himself in a garb of shame "verschämte Gewand" set to a sinuous line creeping around semitones.

The melodic line gradually opens out further as the poet talks of the gift of speech with which man can witness "all-encompassing love".

The setting of one of Hölderlin's letters to his mother has similarly tortuous opening phrases, descriptive of the poet's frustration that he cannot make himself completely understood. The second song, a fragment merely entitled *"An..."* (To... ) also has a winding melodic line, but here the vocalist is required to pick out certain main pitches representative of the ideal world of Elysium and Diotima (the embodiment of Hölderlin's ideal love) whilst singing winding elaborations *bocca chiusa* suggestive of the poet's struggle to reach this ideal.

The painful struggle to reach articulacy is also represented in these wordless phrases. "Der Spaziergang" ("the Walk"), too, is based largely on chromatic scales, but the line here is made more wide-ranging by octave displacements. Here also the musical elaborations on certain syllables are suggestive of struggle.

The song which Kurtág places centrally in his sample programme, "An Zimmern" (To Zimmer), makes use of scale-patterns to depict "die Linien des Lebens" (the lines of life). Here the effect of the scales is entirely different. The opening phrases are based around a scale of C major which contrasts with the anguished quality of the more chromatic numbers. Although the song opens with a wordless, bocca chiusa groping for articulacy, the text is quickly reach-ed. The melismas in the rest of the song are sung as part of the text, they are not mumbling additions of incoherence. The whole tenor of this poem is more positive than the rest in the set: Hölderlin declares that the gods can enrich our lives "with harmonies and eternal joy and peace."

The pitch set of a semitone plus a minor 3rd is another unifying element between the songs. it is often linked with concepts of the ideal. It is already found in the first song for the words "Du edles Wild" (you noble Nature).

The same motif, now transposed down a semitone, is also the opening phrase of the second song depicting the ideal state of "Elysium". Importantly in this number it is also the motif for Diotima, stressing the link between the ideal state and the ideal love.

The third piece, "Gestalt und Geist" also opens with this pitch set, and this version of it is quoted exactly in the setting of the Paul Celan poem at the words "käme ein Mensch" ("if a man came"), which links this pitch set with Hölderlin himself. Almost the entire song is based on the motif. Kurtág suggests the Celan setting as the finale in the sample programme, and it is difficult to see how another of the settings could follow its furious climax on the nonsense word "Pallaksch!". The poet is now reduced to frustrated babbling which contrasts with the gift of speech described in "Im Walde" with its promise of being able to convey the concept of the divine. Philippe Lacoux-Labarthe has interpreted Celan's poem as referring to the problem for the artist in the second half of the twentieth century "who wanted to represent his own historical epoch as Hîlderlin did during his own lifetime, just imagine how doomed he would be to stammer like the "existentialist" hoboes of Samuel Beckett's plays"[3] —a reference which leads on to a discussion of *...pas à pas—nulle part...* It remains to be seen what revisions and additions Kurtág makes to the Hölderlin-Gesange, but it already forms a powerful experience.

## ...pas à pas—nulle part...poèmes de Samuel Beckett, Opus 36

The stumbling for articulacy is echoed in *...pas à pas...* This work is not yet published and the score available to date differs in some respects from the tape of the premiere, which suggests that Kurtág is still in the process of revision. This is a song cycle to be performed as presented in the score. It is a very substantial work for baritone, string trio and a percussionist, with thirty one vocal numbers and instrumental prelude and interludes. Starting with citations from Beckett himself, it ends with Beckett's translations of epigrams of Chamfort, and so we come full-circle to Lichtenberg: he and Chamfort were almost exact contemporaries. The percussion required is wide-ranging, and includes a Japanese odaiko, a "little Chinese tamtam", a "Burma gong", a police whistle, and a tin containing dried maize. The percussionist is even asked to vocalize at times.

The use of such extensive percussion is an interesting development for Kurtág, and it is of course tempting to draw comparisons with Boulez's *Le Marteau sans Maître,* and the references to "night" and the apparent madness of many of the numbers also has echoes of *Pierrot Lunaire,* but the style here is very much Kurtág's.

The work was composed between 1993 and 1998, and it is not surprising, therefore, to find certain similarities in material with the Hölderlin songs, which may or may not have been a conscious choice. In fact Kurtág does quote himself quite deliberately in the fifth instrumental *Intermezzo,* which is based on the waltz

3 ■ Philippe Lacoux-Labarthe "Poetry as experience" translated by Anne-Catherine Reilly in SUBSTANCE 60 (in prep.) University of Wisconsin Press; website: substance.arts.uwo.ca

"Hommage à Ránki György" from Book 3 of *Játékok,* Kurtág's set of piano pieces for children. Here the dedicatee remains the same, and the waltz has changed from being a "verkli-keringő" ("hurdy-gurdy waltz") to a "Pizzicato-keringő", but the material is virtually unchanged from the original version. This is a waltz that starts but never quite gets anywhere: the only melody is short-lived, before the accompaniment takes over again, and this too disintegrates in metrical chaos, indeed it goes "nulle part" which makes it such a fitting choice for the present work. The opening of the final song is reminiscent of the fifth of the Microludes, Opus 13 with its gentle, almost folk-like melody.

Kurtág quotes other composers too, as, for instance Bizet, in the twentieth song "De pied fermé". Here the depiction of blindly marching on without a goal is portrayed by the first phrase only of the 'Toreador's Song' from *Carmen*!

There is much humour in this work compared with the *Hölderlin-Gesänge,* but this is suddenly dispelled in the outbursts in the penultimate song where the most outwardly dramatic gestures are found. The English text of this song reads: "The trouble with tragedy is the fuss it makes about life and death and other tuppeny aches." Here the word "fuss" is accompanied by a police whistle, a moment of almost slapstick comedy which is quickly banished as the vocalist is directed to sing "furioso" on the outburst "Wha!" at the end. This has echoes of the outcry on "Pallaksch" at the end of the Hölderlin settings: a final cry of frustration. The bleakness is all the more palpable for this sudden contrast. Despite the humorous touches, however, Kurtág resists the temptation to overdo the comic effects, although there are moments of comic vocalisation as in Song 15, where the word "pire" ("worst") is to be sung "glissando" and "quasi Flatterzunge".

This is a work largely of restrained dynamics and gentle textures in spite of the array of percussion. The timbres which Kurtág draws from his ensemble are often particularly beautiful. The 23rd song "Sleep" combines a flowing, gentle vocal line above four-note marimba chords played tremolo. The 14th song "fin fond de néant" combines the baritone at the bass of his register with eminently quiet tremolo Cello and Boo-bams. Occasionally the texture is given impetus by loud outbursts from the drums as in going from the second to the third song or towards the end of "Le petit macabre". It is as if a malevolent drum major were directing proceedings. There are echoes of Pozzo's aggression. In the 27th song "Wit in fools is something shocking, like cabhorses galopping" bring to mind Pozzo "riding" Lucky in *Waiting for Godot.*

The opening *Introduzione* is set at almost impossibly quiet dynamics: ppp for percussion, and pppp for the string trio. The percussionist taps out a quiet tattoo of faltering steps—above which the string trio whisper scale patterns! The simple rhythm and the scales are the raw materials of music from which the composer struggles for fluency. "Pas", of course, also means "not", reinforcing the concept of "going nowhere" ("nulle part") and even the firmest of steps in song number 20, "de pied fermé" are "sans but" (aimless), as is the ridiculous posturing of the Pozzo-like galopping of number 27.

The first song "pas a pas" opens out from the semitone, minor 3rd pattern met in the Hölderlin settings. The struggle to become coherent is continued here. The hesitant sound of the word "pas" recalls the stuttering Papageno from *Die Zauberflöte.* The vocal line uses no more than six pitches mirroring the groping towards articulacy. The sound-world of stumbling is recalled in the 6th song, "écoute-les..." for

the words " sans mot les pas aux pas un à un" set to a hesitant hocket texture.

Number 19 "Dieppe" also repeats the words "les pas" this time with the marimba in canon one step behind. Stuttering hocket textures pervade many of the songs, for instance, the fourth "....le tout petit macabre—Ligetinek" ("the very little macabre—for Ligeti") "imagine si ceci un beau jour cessait".

The interludes provide moments of repose for the listener from the intensity of the vocal numbers. Each one is an oasis of stillness, the first exploring delicate bell-sounds, and the third and fourth played with the quietest of string tones. The third and fourth *intermezzi* share the same material, the fourth extending the third slightly. Both make great use of chords made up of two major thirds a semitone apart, Kurtág's "purity chord".[4] Only the third intermezzo promises much with its loud and forceful opening, but this too subsides into the simple rhythms and scale-like steps of the Introduction. The final number is an elegiac song with its air of quiet resignation and it provides a most beautiful contrast to the preceding number, but it is still an expression of despair, subsiding at the end on a downward chromatic scale "sigh" to the lowest vocal register.

"Stuttering" and "stammering" the Beckett texts may be but they have opened up a rich vein of inspiration for Kurtág. *...pas à pas...* is one of Kurtág's finest works, and deserves to be considered as one of the most important works of the latter half of the century. It is ironic that in a musical sense this work goes anywhere but "nulle part"! ❧

4 ■ Kurtág told the author that this chord for him represented "tisztaság" = purity

Paul Griffiths

# Master Works, Master Releases

## György Kurtág on Record

Until a decade ago two Hungaroton LPs contained the entire corpus of György Kurtág's music on record. Now new CD releases come freely, and many of them are exemplary.

Definitely one such is the Keller Quartet's outstanding collection (ECM 1598), which opens with *Aus der Ferne,* an entire musical drama acted out in two and a half minutes. Since this is indeed music, and wordless, it is not easy to say just what the drama entails, but it might go as follows. Over a funeral march drumbeat, played by the cello in monotone pizzicatos, the other instruments formulate a question, at first tentatively, then with a little more confidence. They are refused—or, since these are the same instruments playing, they refuse themselves. They try again. There is another refusal. But the question will not go away.

Kurtág has spent his life packing the utmost expression into the tiniest forms, and the Keller Quartet, who grew up under his tutelage at the Budapest Liszt Academy, understand how important it is to place every chord exactly, to find the right lift or sag in every change from one note to the next—and two notes in Kurtág will often be a melody. Perhaps their most remarkable performance is of the *Officium breve,* which they seem to breathe. The result is often magically beautiful, as in the sequence of wide harmonies ending in octaves just before the quoted Webern canon. But more than that, it is full of meaning: expressively, and also structurally, in the web of connections that emanates from the Webern and eventually, movingly embraces a fragment from Szervánszky. The programme also includes Kurtág's other two major quartets, his op.1 and the Twelve Microludes, as well as two performances of *Ligatura-Message,* to which the composer himself contributes a few chords on celesta.

Offering much more of Kurtág playing Kurtág, ECM 1619 has the composer and his wife Márta in selections from *Játékok—Games,* (his several books of piano "play material": games, studies, homages, portraits, constructions, images) and from his transcriptions, represented here by four Bach movements spaced through the programme. The sequence, beginning with a duet version of the tiny "Flowers we are" melody that has been one of the central imprints of Kurtág's musical mind for more than thirty years, resembles those the Kurtágs have often played in concert, though it is rather longer, extending to a

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little over three quarters of an hour. Four-hand pieces are grouped around the Bach items, which are all also for both players, with collections of solos in between.

To some extent the Bach movements are moments of space and calm, of rest from the generally harsher, more fractured, often brusquely concise and starkly contrasting *Játékok* pieces. On the other hand, there are features that the transcriptions share with the original items, especially in how both sorts of music are played here—with strong expressive gestures and closely drawn dialogue between the players. The *Játékok* performances also make contact with further musical worlds: Debussy, Bartók and, in some of the most haunting numbers, folksong. The composer, in his solo sequence, sometimes wields an almost aggressive harshness of attack, in the interests of intensity, but he can also be luminous, in pursuit of the songs and bell-like resonances that dominate the recital.

A third recent disc from the same company, ECM 1711, includes Kurtág's earliest acknowledged work, the first movement of his Viola Concerto (whose other movement no longer has his full support), performed by Kim Kashkashian together with Bartók's Viola Concerto, as completed by Tibor Serly, and *Replica* by Péter Eötvös, who also conducts. All the performances are excellent, and the Eötvös is a fine piece—a highly musical, songful and imaginative drama for a soloist beset by a largely unfeeling ensemble, with secondary soloists (five orchestral violas) who are willing to leave the crowd and voice their sympathy. The Kurtág, dating from the early fifties, is unsurprisingly close to Bartók, not least in its imposing orchestral opening. When the viola enters, though, it seems to be wanting something quieter and gentler, and it soon finds within the prevailing 6/8 and 9/8 time signatures occasions for a wistful waltz song. This is one of the most personal moments in the score, along with some beautiful later passages where the strings are divided and, not least, the closing gesture, where the viola quietly and simply asserts itself, with a nod. The piece—"a romantical ballad" Kurtág has called it—is one of his rare bigger movements, unequalled for length in his output until *What is the Word,* three and a half decades later. But while it is, certainly, impressive in its continuity, it seems to be trying to leave us with single gestures—whether forceful or lyrical, dramatic or nostalgic—such as the composer has gone on creating in the many fragments of his maturity. This is music that, in defiance of a Serly, appears to be drifting apart.

Finally, Hungaroton have produced a new album (HCD 31821) featuring Adrienne Csengery—the singer who enjoyed such a productive association with Kurtág in the eighties—in recordings she made for the company (the *Attila József Fragments, S.K.—Remembrance Noise* and the final song of *Requiem for the Beloved*) and previously unpublished radio recordings of two works written for her, *Messages of the Late R.V. Trusova* and *Scenes from a Novel.* This new material is most exciting. The performance of *Messages,* with András Mihály and Budapest musicians, is far hotter than the one Csengery made the following year, 1983, in Paris with Pierre Boulez. She is more expressive and more in control, and the instrumental playing backs her up beautifully and emphatically, often with a quasi-vocal immediacy of its own. Also remarkable are the performances of *S.K.* and, particularly, *Scenes from a Novel,* both with András Keller, while the *Requiem* song again features the composer at the bell-piano. ❧

Tamás Koltai

# Great Men, Little Men

József Katona: *Bánk bán* • Gergely Csiky: *Ingyenélők* (Freeloaders); Zsigmond Móricz: *Rokonok* (Relatives) • Mihály Kornis: *Kádárné balladája — A Kádár beszéd* (The Ballad of Mrs Kádár — The Kádár Speech)

In practice, the quality of politics (politics: the management of the affairs of a city *(polis)* in ancient Greece, and in contemporary usage, of a state) can be judged from the relations between those in power and those they have power over, the "great" and the "small". Many plays in the repertoire draw on this primal relation. In *Bánk bán* (1815; alongside *The Tragedy of Man,* the most important Hungarian 19th-century play) Bánk, who represents authority, meets Tiborc, a peasant, on several occasions. Bánk is of noble blood (the archaic term "bán" refers to his high office; the plot is set in the thirteenth century) and is the king's lieutenant when the latter is out of the country. Tiborc the peasant once saved Bánk's life in a battle by shielding him with his own body from sword thrusts. Their first encounter takes place in the royal palace. Urged by his followers, who are talking of a political crisis, Bánk secretly returns to the palace from a tour of inspection of the country. In an attempt to get leftover food for his starving family, Tiborc steals into the palace. Bánk discovers that a conspiracy has been brewing against Queen Gertrudis and that the conspirators use the name of his own wife, Melinda, as a password. The situation at the court has thus deteriorated to the point when a woman's honour might be violated. Despite his wretchedness and his resolve to relieve it, Tiborc cannot bring himself to steal. This is the situation of their encounter: Bánk, the king's lieutenant responsible for the country's well-being, and Tiborc, the peasant who lists the common people's grievances. The important point in this scene is that they fail to understand each other. Bánk dutifully listens to the grievances, but the words do not really sink in, so preoccupied is he with his own problem. Tiborc lists the people's grievances, but soon realizes that Bánk is paying no attention, his words are just a cry in the wilderness. One of the emblematic moments in Katona's play, this scene is difficult to stage because of the many possible interpretations.

In the Summer Theatre at Zsámbék the scene is treated with irony. We witness the pointless encounter between the politician/intellectual Bánk and a bespectacled and unshaved Tiborc, looking something like an unemployed teacher or homeless ex-civil servant. Two people who remain complete strangers, even though in a social sense, outside their private spheres,

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they are dependent on one another: this is precisely the message of Katona's play. Since they are to meet many more times during the play, the director, László Bocsárdi, has ample opportunity to heighten the irony. Tiborc always arrives at the worst moment; he always tries to catch the politician when the latter is immersed in his private problems. In this production the effect is comical. Not the figures, it is the situation that is comical. The gulf between authority and the country, between leaders and the masses, is revealed, and this makes the classical play's modern interpretation possible.

The direction here is a radical departure from the traditional manner of presenting this play. The central theme, the Queen's assassination (a historical event) receives a grotesque overtone. Maia Morgenstern, a Romanian actress with an international reputation, speaking in strongly accented Hungarian, plays Queen Gertrudis. One of the original conflicts of the play is that the Queen is a foreigner, a Meranian, who dislikes Hungarians. Instead of the haughty and obstinate woman of traditional interpretation, she is presented here as the product of the frivolous West, a bohemian and a buffoon. Her minion teaches her to speak Hungarian properly. In the scene of the great revenge, the emblematic moment in the classic Hungarian interpretation, she makes sexual advances to Bánk. The audience was taken aback by such a frivolous interpretation of the play (still compulsory reading in the national school curriculum) and, it must be said, not everyone liked it.

This production took a low angle view of the heroic past. The "great man" is removed from his pedestal and presented as a contemporary man. (Not that there is anything new in this: Hungarian plays of the late 19th and the early 20th century often portray political relations from this low-angle camera position, from the "little man's" angle. This presentation is usually critical, or even satirical.)

Gergely Csiky wrote his *Proletárok* (Proletarians) in 1880. He was not very clear about the meaning of the word; he wanted to write about the parasites of society, people who feed on hypocrisy, devotion to false ideas and the corruptness of the political system. The play is usually billed under the title *Ingyenélők* (Freeloaders).

The central character is a "sacred widow" who trades in memories relating to the Hungarian War of Liberation of 1848/49. She pretends to be the widowed wife of one of the martyrs, a colonel supposedly executed during the reprisals that followed the defeat but who, in fact, had spied for the enemy, the Austrians. She engages in extensive correspondence, collecting money for a noble cause which she then pockets. One of her circle is even more crooked than she is: a man who sells his divorced wives for a single "payment." The play is about their "dubious dealings", in which a poor girl is to be the prospective victim, if the plot works. Had Ostrovsky written the play, perhaps it would have been so. Csiky is no Ostrovsky, though; he lacks the necessary ruthlessness. By way of a happy ending, Csiky settles for the unveiling of the culprits. The cutting edge of the satire goes blunt, and the play, after a promising start, goes flat.

The company obviously decided that the conditions described in the play resemble the current state of affairs, as far as false emotions, widespread swindling and corruption go. However, János Szikora's direction fails to take up the possibilities in making a comparison seriously. Perhaps the play's intellectual capital was insufficient for this. Only the happy ending carries a touch of irony: the

actors step out of their roles and march off into the realm of irrationalism to airs of Suppé's *Light Cavalry*. What we are left there with is a mediocre and not particularly witty comedy.

Zsigmond Móricz's 1932 novel *Rokonok* (Relatives), and its adaptation for the stage, is about a little man becoming a "great man" of the provinces. It portrays the typical rural Hungary in the first half of the 20th century. (The play is frequently staged and only recently I wrote here about the Kaposvár Theatre's production.) A small-town clerk, one István Kopjáss, is chosen to be the town's public prosecutor by the local business potentates, who think that they will have an easy job of controlling him. Nevertheless, Kopjáss comes into office on a "clean hands" ticket. He soon uncovers the dubious dealings of the local mafia, as we would call them these days. Everyone is implicated in the fraud, the bribery and the corruption, from the mayor, through the bank manager, right down to the civil servants and the business potentates. Before long they have the "clean hands" in their pocket. Hardly aware of how he has become corrupted, Kopjáss finds that suicide remains the only way out.

In today's Hungary, where a parliamentary committee has shown itself utterly inadequate for more than a year now in trying to get to the bottom of the nationwide oil scam, a play such as *Relatives* can expect a good response from the audience. (The scam involved importing fuel oil under favourable tax breaks, refining to diesel and, naturally, avoiding any of the taxes due, while collecting on the subsidy for heating oil.) Radnóti Színház, a Budapest theatre attended mainly by the middle classes and the intelligentsia, hopes to draw on people's interest in public affairs. Tamás Jordán's direction is sparse: with the stage being so small, the focus is on the characters. The town's public prosecutor is of medium age, and of medium intellectual capacities. He is not naïve enough to find anything extraordinary about the corruption in public life, yet he is not smart enough to make his own pile while playing the role of the cleaner-upper. He is a typical half-man: half-honest, half-straight, half-smart, half-tenacious, half-heroic—with the result that he seems none of these. In situations where power and money are at stake, one cannot be half-in and half-out. A little man meddling in big-time politics, trying to climb up on the ladder and to unmask people at the top simultaneously, especially if he cannot adjust, is likely to come to ruin.

The best-known case of a little man working his way to the top in Hungary is undoubtedly János Kádár's. A worker turned Communist First Secretary who never lost touch with his own class: absurd as it may seem, this image has survived in many people long after Kádár's death. This is evidenced in an opinion poll carried out recently, in which Kádár was named by many "the greatest Hungarian of the 20th century". Indeed, he also did very well in the all-time ranking, where he finished close behind St. Stephen, the King whose crowning marked the beginning of Hungary's statehood, the millennium of which we are celebrating this year. Neither the brutal crushing of the 1956 Revolution, nor the series of executions that followed afterwards, nor the political course marked by his name, called a "soft" dictatorship after a few years, could undermine Kádár's posthumous popularity in the eyes of a certain section of the public. The reasons would be difficult to discuss within the scope of a theatre review. That much is obvious, however, that the fall of Communism, the change to democracy (more precisely, the ten years that followed the fall) has brought a drop in living standards

for a substantial part of society, mainly the middle and the lower classes, which the increase in civil liberties has not been felt to adequately compensate. Capitalist free competition (if I may borrow the terminology from Marxism) has hardly made the world more attractive in the eyes of those who had been accustomed to a minimum security, sinking further down since. By contrast, it helped keep alive the myths of "the most cheerful barracks in the socialist camp"—and of János Kádár.

Mihály Kornis' play *A Kádár házaspár* (The Kádár Couple) tries to trace the roots of this myth. Consisting of two mono-dramas, the first is called *The Ballad of Mrs Kádár* and the second *The Kádár Speech.* The first one is a literary adaptation of an interview with Kádár's widow. The basic construction of the play is reminiscent of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead,* where the central character of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is shown through the eyes of the minor figures. Mrs Kádár, a simple working woman, is a minor figure on the stage of history. In the play she tells the story of their first meeting, of their involvement in the party's underground activities during the war, and of the 1950s, when Kádár was first Minister of the Interior, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, and finally the victim of a political show trial. She discusses 1956, which her husband initially acknowledged as a popular uprising, sharing the view held by Imre Nagy, the Prime Minister who was later executed on his orders. And she also mentions the switch to the Soviet side, and so on. She reveals all this from the viewpoint of family history, in which the present given by Marshal Tito, or the menu, or the fate of a winter coat were more important than "international politics". An uneducated working-class woman as a First Lady: a grotesque and touching situation that sets the tone for the monologue.

The *Kádár Speech* could appropriately be described as an *objet trouvé.* In fact, it is a—somewhat edited and typographically re-arranged—version of the ex-First Secretary last public speech—he had already been removed from office by then. He delivered it in 1989 at a conference known in party jargon as an "activists' meeting" just a year before the first free elections of 1990 dotted the i-s and crossed the t-s of the Communist regime's downfall. By that time Kádár was completely enfeebled mentally; most of his speech concerned his paralysed right arm and 1956, or more precisely, the executed Prime Minister Imre Nagy, managing to go through the entire speech without actually uttering the name once. It is well known that the aged and seriously ill Kádár (he died soon afterwards, on the very day when the Supreme Court ruled on Imre Nagy's rehabilitation and Parliament decided on his reburial) was intensely concerned with moral responsibility for the executions, or to be precise, he maniacally tried to shift the blame for the political murders from his own conscience. Such a struggle with one's own phantoms might even have resulted in a tragedy of Macbethian proportions, had Kádár's mental deterioration been less advanced. But what we have here is the document of mumbled and pathetic chatter, which even the careful typographical arrangement could not elevate to the level of "literature".

The designer of the Új Színház's chamber theatre chose a typical petit bourgeois interior for *The Ballad of Mrs Kádár,* and a miniature auditorium for the *The Kádár Speech.* No matter how good the actors are, their monologues are not strong enough to work well in the documentary/realist and anecdotal style that the director János Ács envisaged for the play. Our attempt to understand the myth of a little man's transformation into a "great man" has failed. And so has our desire to burst the bubble. ❧

In my review of Frederick Turner and Zsuzsanna Ozsváth's translations of Attila József, "The Iron-Blue Vault", I referred to a quatrain in the poem "Nyár" as it appeared in the editions I have. There is, indeed, another version much closer to the Turner/Ozsváth translation. For this, to them, my apologies. I don't think the point radically changes my view of the poetic value of the book, which, like their previous work, has great strengths and, to my mind, certain weaknesses.

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*The blame is entirely mine. I of course knew the poem had two versions and should have warned the reviewer but forgot. I apologize.—The Editor*

SÁNDOR DOMANOVSZKY

*The Chain Bridge as illuminated now.*

*Teachers, psychologists and educationists who have dealt with generations of young people are agreed that the nineties produced spectacular changes in their lives and mentalities. Never before experienced opportunities became available after the end of Communism, and yet students today carry heavier burdens than any previous generation. More is expected from them and, as a result, their communal life suffers. Furthermore, many parents do not really trust schools, and insist on private tutoring for their children, particularly in preparing for university admission, thus further reducing the short enough leisure time of the young. A surfeit of exams, uniform tests and trial school leaving examinations take all the fun out of learning, and lead many young people to think that their parents care less for them than for the marks they obtain. Many—in terror that their offspring might not be admitted to the preferred institute of higher learning—truly expect that the child too should care more for performance than for health or peace of mind.*

*From: Géza Wolf: How the Young Live Now. pp. 60–76.*



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